Windows Vista™

The Official Magazine

DISCOVER HOW TO...

- Stay in touch with video chat
- Protect your home for free
- Go green with your PC

32-PAGES OF REVIEWS

MP3, laptops, games & more

Get what's best for you – check out our unmissable buying advice inside!

FAME Be a YouTube star
FORTUNE Ace every exam
FUN Games to boost your brain

WIN! LEXAR USB DRIVES WORTH $900!

see page 54

CONNECT... ANYWHERE

Your stuff: when you want it, where you want it, how you want it

Reader's verdict
7-megapixel digital compacts from $360! *p96*

Play in a whole new way
Crysis changes the game – only on Windows Vista *p28*

DERWENT HOWARD
ISSUE 3 MAY 2007
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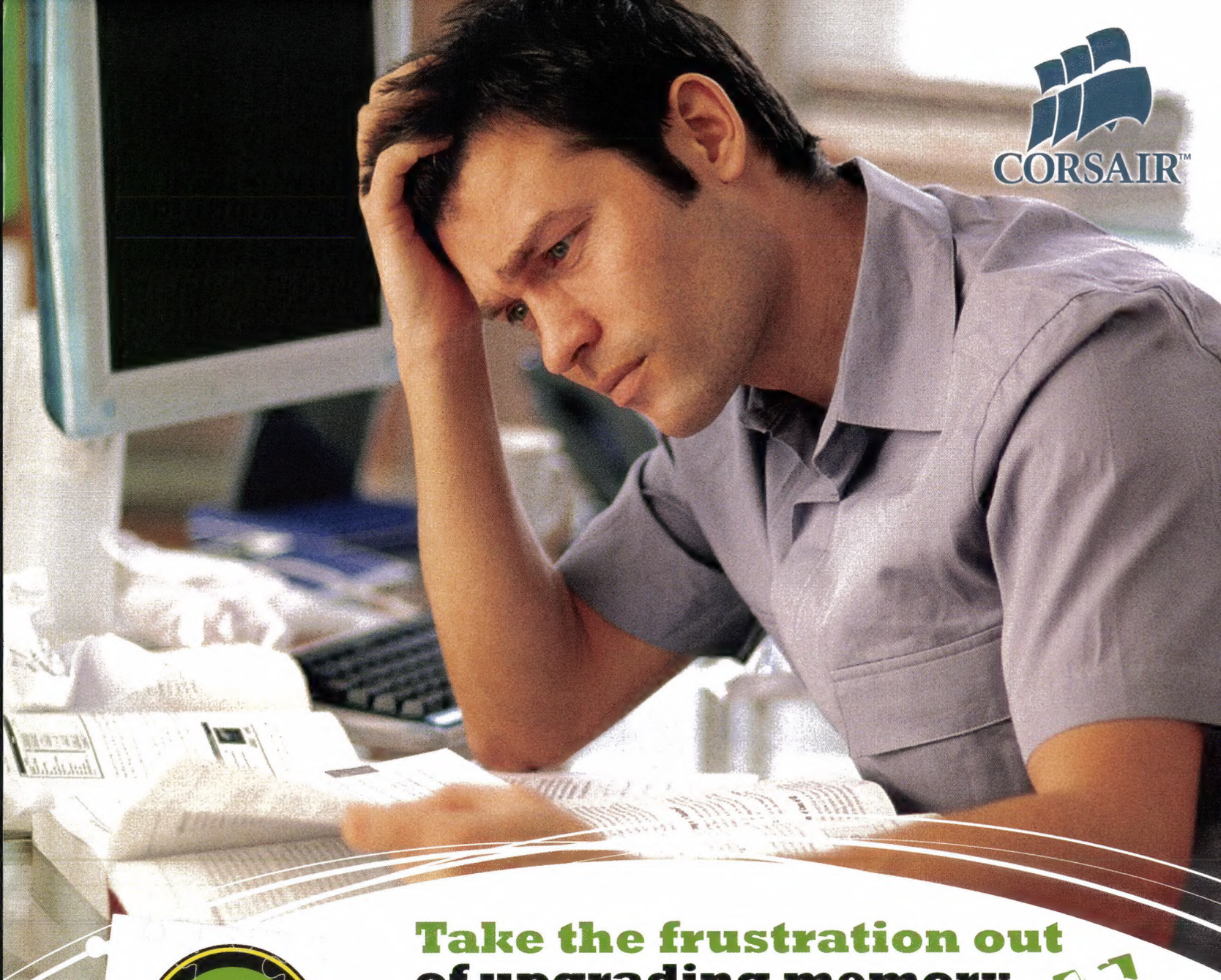

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Windows Vista The Official Magazine

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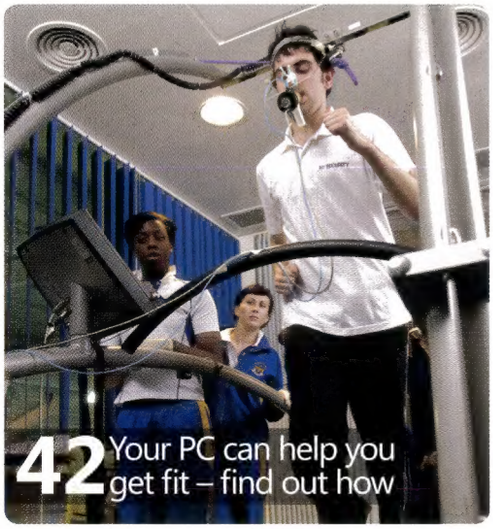

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The Samsung SyncMaster BW series were developed, right from the start, in collaboration with Microsoft to deal with the multi-tasking demands of the new Windows Vista™ operating system. The Samsung SyncMaster 931BW, 206BW & 266BW all offer very fast response times, high contrast ratios and HDCP compatibility for powerful video and graphics performance. Add to all that, the glossy black curves and elegant design. With Samsung's new Vista-Ready Wide Monitor, it's not that hard to imagine. To learn more visit **samsung.com.au**

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Windows Vista The Official Magazine

Highlights of the month...

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OUR PROMISE TO YOU...

Jargon-free guides
We explain how you can get more from Windows Vista in a way that's clear and easy to understand.

Real-world advice
We show you how Windows Vista can help you get more from your interests and activities.

Trusted reviews
We help you buy the right products for your needs – and show you how to get the best from them.

Great value
An affordable magazine packed with money-saving tips and offers every month.

We listen to you
It's your feedback and advice that makes *Windows Vista Magazine* what it is, so you can contact us at any time.

Welcome

It seems strange to think there was a time when PCs didn't connect to the internet. These days, going online is the number one reason to have a computer, with most of us buying a PC solely to send email and surf the web. In this issue we show you plenty of other great things to do online, from posting your video on YouTube to setting up a face-to-face video chat with friends and family. We'll also give you a sneak peak at the future of online TV and look at simple home security solutions that you can use to ensure your home is safe when you're not there. That's all in our Do More section, starting on page 62.

The internet has become such an essential part of our lives that we're also demanding to take it with us wherever we go. With that in mind, we look at a selection of the latest notebook PCs in our Big Test, and help a road warrior stay connected on the go in the third and final installment of our Windows Vista Experience feature on page 34.

We hope you enjoy the magazine and, as ever, we want to hear from you. Email me with your thoughts and comments and we'll keep trying to deliver the kind of magazine you want to read.

Stuart Whitmore, Executive editor
Email **stuart@vistamag.com.au**

Visit us online at **www.vistamag.com.au**
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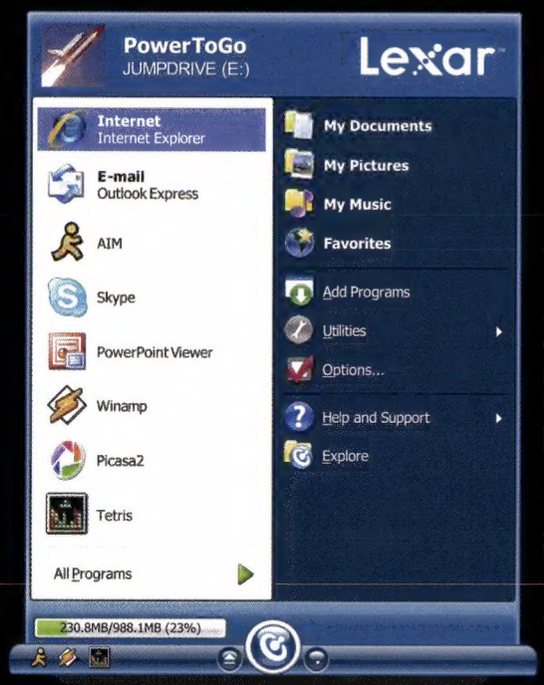
CARRY YOUR PC IN YOUR POCKET



Windows Vista

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Meet the team

Say hello to the people who helped create this issue of Windows Vista: The Official Magazine

Expert panel

Gizmo
Tech support team

Gizmo is Microsoft's official services partner for the launch of Windows Vista in Australia, so what the Gizmotechs don't know about installing and upgrading Vista isn't worth knowing. www.gizmo.com.au

James Senior
Technical Specialist

James works for Microsoft as a Technology Specialist. As an expert on Windows Vista and the 2007 Microsoft Office system, he talks to customers and partners about how it can benefit them both in business and at home.

Mark Salloway
MVP, Media Center

Mark is a software engineering student currently taking time out working as a developer and tester. Mark has been named MVP five times since 2002. He runs advice sites for Windows XP and Media Center.

Craig Murphy
MVP, Connected Systems

A software developer, author, Microsoft MVP and proud Scot, Craig's active with Scottish Developers (www.scottishdevelopers.com), Agile Scotland (agilescotland.com) and Developer (www.developerday.co.uk).

WHAT'S AN MVP?

Most Valuable Professionals (MVPs) are people who share their knowledge and expertise of Microsoft products with other users, both online and offline. The MVP status is an annual award presented by Microsoft to these people. Find out more at mvp.support.microsoft.com.

Sign up for our email newsletter... and win a Nokia N91 8GB!

The best way to stay in touch with what we're up to at Windows Vista Magazine is to sign up to receive our email newsletter.

We'll send you regular updates on what's happening in the world of Windows Vista, and bring you competition news and special money-saving offers.

Sign up and you'll also be in with a chance of winning a Nokia N91 music phone with 8GB of memory for your favourite songs! Just head to the website to get started.

To sign up to the newsletter go to **www.vistamag.com.au**

Reader panel

Meet the readers who have been contributing to and commenting on the third issue of the mag

Becky Holt tests digital cameras for her brother's wedding on page 96

Paul Marshall speaks out about the Maxtor Shared Storage Plus on page 16

Paul Mallett comments on the reassurance of digial home security, page 68

Tina Pluchino tells us how her Philips Photoframe is performing on page 105

John Watson Turn to page 111 to see why John favours the Canon iP6600d

Your name here Want to get involved? Email us at the address above

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- **Handwriting Recognition**
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MORE INFORMATION: www.wacom.com.au

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Over to you...

Email us with your views on Windows Vista, the magazine or anything else that sparks your interest

WIRELESS WORRIES

I enjoyed the articles on setting up a home entertainment system and a digital lounge in issue two. However, I am concerned about the effects of all this wireless technology on the body. I read an article about the health concerns of cordless phones and the effects of the base station transmitting waves around the house. Surely powerful wireless routers can't be good for you?
Lee Cameron

Paul says **There's no evidence that wireless networks have any effect on health. However, that hasn't stopped some schools from dismantling their wireless networks after parents expressed fears.**

WHY UPGRADE?

I'm unconvinced that upgrading to Windows Vista is good for me. I have software that does everything that Windows Vista does. I usually use my PC for web browsing, for which I use Internet Explorer 7, and photo work, for which I have Adobe Photoshop and Album. I also use it for lots of other things, and my system copes with it all with ease. I ran the compatibility program on my desktop and have a long list of conflicts that would need to be resolved before I could run Windows Vista. Then there's the expense of purchasing two Windows Vista operating systems and extra memory for my laptop...
Stuart Middleton

Jon says **It's not trivial to upgrade to Windows Vista, and you're right to have used the Upgrade Advisor first. However, it should be straightforward to get the correct updates from the manufacturers, and once you've started using Windows Vista, it's hard to go back. While you can get basic features from other software, it's so much easier having it all built in to Windows; everything works together.**

WOW FACTOR

It's been Windows Vista month in our house. I ran the Upgrade Advisor and upgraded my RAM and graphics card. Everything else seemed ready for Windows Vista Premium, so in went the DVD. I've been using it for a week now without a problem. Search is brilliant, so is the photo tagging setup. I like Sidebar and Windows Calendar. Media Center is also great. The interventionist security setup is annoying at first, but the day I'm asked to give permission for a change I didn't request I'll be delighted to say no! First thoughts: wow! Best Windows yet.
Maurice Durbin

Nick says **The editor reckons the Windows Vista Search is so good it saves the magazine the equivalent hours of an extra member of staff. Which is a little worrying for the rest of us!**

GIZMO Q&A: YOUR PROBLEMS SOLVED!

Since installing Vista, I cannot connect to MSN Messenger. Each time I initialize the program it tells me that it has stopped working and that Windows is looking at the problem. I did manage to get it started once, but I then installed AVG Free virus protection and it stopped again. When I go to connect Messenger it tells me "a problem caused the program to stop working correctly. Windows will close the program and notify you if a solution is available." Then a help program appears which tells me about DEP. I work my way through that program but that does not get me started. Is there anyone who knows how to solve this problem?
Johanna van Nieuwenhuysen

Gizmo says **Many Acer laptops have software installed on them which causes MSN Messenger (now Live Messenger) to crash and display a Data Execution Prevention (DEP) error. A patch is available from http://tinyurl.com/39c556/. If you don't have an Acer, many issues with Live Messenger on Vista can be resolved by updating to the latest versions of Java, Flash and Live Messenger itself.**

Send us your Vista problems and you could win a Gizmopack on-site service worth up to $239!

Email us at feedback@vistamag.com.au

Windows Vista The Official Magazine

To contact the editorial team, email..
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The Future Now!

Experience it with Verbatim

With less than 10 years since the debut of DVD, the 'Next Generation' of optical media is already on the production line. This is due to the demands of the new revolution in home entertainment- High Definition (HD).

High Definition TV provides incredible picture quality and surround sound. The superb resolution, excellent contrast, vivid colours and multi-channel soundtracks are capacity heavy. Therefore, discs with much higher capacities are needed in order to record HD footage. Two formats have been released to meet this demand- Blu-ray and HD DVD. Verbatim is ideally positioned to offer you both formats with the same legendary quality and reliability that we have become famous for.

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Start

Everything you need to enjoy the month

10 things you must do in May

1 TAKE WING

Plan your winter warmer now with STA Travel's Route Planner. Choose your stops and your side trips and see the trip mapped out in front of you. Go to www.statravel.com.au.

2 GO-GO GADGETS

Use Vista's Sidebar Gadgets to get everything from the weather to the Word of the Day. Visit gallery.live.com.

3 MOVE YOUR HIPS

The Melbourne International Jazz Festival swings into town from May 3-13. Hit www.melbournejazz.com.

4 COME OUT AND PLAY

From May 7-19, South Australia celebrates the arts for children with the Come Out festival. There will be activities, exhibitions, lectures and forums at various locations all across the state. Head to www.comeout.on.net for more information and to book for events.

5 PIMP YOUR PC

Get in control of your PC gaming by using your Xbox 360s wireless controller with it. All you need is the new Xbox 360 Wireless Gaming Receiver and you're set.

6 SLEEP WITH TIGERS

Make use of daylight savings and wake up to the sounds of the wild at Taronga Zoo's Roar and Snore sessions. Check out www.zoo.nsw.gov.au.

7 HUG YOUR MUM

May 13 is Mother's Day. Surprise your mum by planning the perfect day. You can find plenty of ways to wow mum by jumping online.

8 SEE SPAIN

Need a Spanish culture hit but can't afford the flight over? Head down to the Spanish Film Festival, which is visiting Melbourne, Sydney, Perth and Brisbane. Dates and venues are listed on www.spanishfilmfestival.com.

9 CLIMB OUR BRIDGE

In 1932 the completion of the Sydney Harbour Bridge united a city. Celebrate its 75th year by climbing the old girl – the winter nights make an evening ascent ideal. Visit www.bridgeclimb.com.au for booking details.

10 IDENTIFY THIS

Here's a close up of something we've featured this issue. To win it, tell us what it is by emailing competitions@vistamag.com.au.

Want to get out and about? Let your iPod become your running partner Page 42

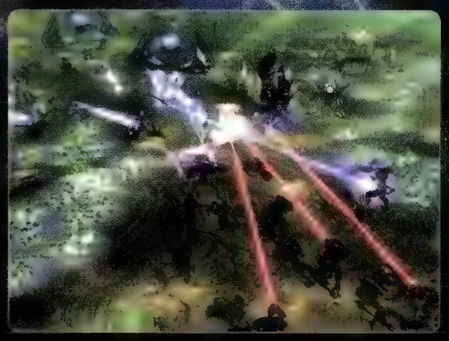
Within two years, US researchers hope to have developed a bionic eye implant that will allow blind people to see

PLAY THIS...

COMMAND AND CONQUER 3: TIBERIUM WARS

Web www.commandandconquer.com
Available Now
Price $99.95
Age rating MA 15+

All you need to know if you've ever played Command & Conquer is this: Kane is back. If you haven't then it's not much more complicated: in the battle-ravaged world of the future, another war has kicked off between sturdy-chinned forces of good and the sinisterly-goateed forces of evil, and you'll need tanks. Lots and lots of tanks. At heart it's a strategy game, but a very approachable one thanks to easily mastered controls and a Hollywood cast list. The story should grip you from the moment the first bullet is fired, and online is a blast, too. The web version has some very TV-like multiplayer features, and has also been inspired by sports footage, with spectator modes and the option for live commentary by other players.



SMASH HIT With effortless appeal Tiberium Wars should be this summer's blockbuster

"It's very approachable thanks to easily mastered controls and a Hollywood cast list"

TLA (THREE-LETTER ABBREVIATION)

PCB: Print-Copy Blunder

"Mistakenly selecting the 'Copies' box in the print dialogue, instead of the page range. So instead of pages 1-20 of your 40-page document, you get 20 copies of it. This situation is quickly remedied by the purchase of more paper and ink (possibly to the detriment to the longevity of our planet)."

Things we heard this month...

Buy beautiful friends online. If your MySpace page needs more friends, then you can now buy them fresh off the shelf at fakeyourspace.com. For legal reasons the site is currently down, but will allegedly be back shortly.

Man dies after a week of non-stop gaming. It's official, computer games are dangerous – although the Chinese man in question was also grossly overweight.

World's oldest blogger. Previously held by 95-year-old Maria Amelia from Spain, this mantle has now passed to 107-year-old Australian, Oliver Riley. Lots to talk about, too, we'd imagine.

It's dangerous to text and drive. Michael Smith, 43 of Britain, tried this and killed a man. Two years inside for what he probably could've said in 10 seconds had he just pulled over...

Laptop takes one for the team. A soldier of the 82nd Airborne Division had his bacon saved by a computer. The Panasonic Toughbook – an extremely rugged laptop – took the bullet during a mission in Iraq. Heroic.

Remote-control pigeons. Researchers in China have placed microchips in pigeons' brains to override their sense of direction.

Email us feedback@vistamag.com.au

Want this...

Stuff you'd like to get your hands on

ACCESS FILES FROM ANY PC

Share files and music over your network and the internet

THEY SAY "Maxtor Shared Storage Plus provides 500GB of storage space on to which users can automatically backup photos, music, work files, and personal records from networked PCs. The drive supports media streaming, allowing users to play back digital photos, music, and video to networked home entertainment systems without being tied to a dedicated computer host. Additional hard drives or sharing printers can be added to either of the drive's two USB ports."

Maxtor press release

WE SAY "Ugly is the new beautiful. Although the styling is far from chic, with a 500GB hard drive and the ability to expand this, you'll learn to love it. Families with multiple computers and a broadband connection will find this device especially handy. Start saving though, it's a tad on the pricey side."

Damian Francis, Staff writer

YOU SAY "You can store all your music, videos and photos on the one drive and then access them from any computer in your house. Fantastic if you have Windows Media Center on more than one PC. Being able to connect and share a printer using the drive is also handy. "

Paul Marshall, Reader

JUST THE FACTS

Maxtor Shared Storage Plus
Web www.seagate.com/maxtor
Price $699 (500GB)
Available Out now

Cool technology
You'll be able to run it all day long thanks to the metal grating that runs half way around the drive. Its tiny holes allow increased airflow making it cool to touch no matter how long its been on.

Want to comment on new hardware? Email us with your contact details!

WE LIKE
Simple View

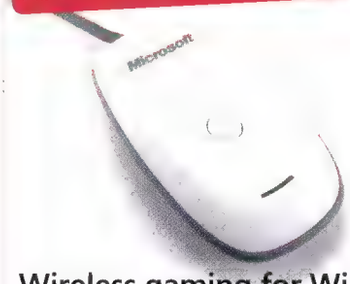
The SimpleView dashboard allows you to track backup and storage data for all users so there will never be any arguments about who is hogging the drive space.

Expand away

Two USB ports on the back of the Shared Storage Plus let you expand your drive. Connect a printer and share it among all your networked home PCs, or expand your storage by adding another external hard drive.

WANT THIS TOO...

Xbox 360 Wireless Gaming



Wireless gaming for Windows

■ The wired Xbox 360 controller lacks the freedom of being able to wave it around and, in extreme cases, throw it at something. No longer: plug in this dongle and you can use your standard 360 wireless pad with your PC. One downside – you'll get through the batteries faster.

Acer Aspire L320

Desktop power, laptop size

■ Part of the new ultra small range from Acer, the Aspire L320 is ten times smaller than a standard PC tower. It doesn't skimp on power either, with an Intel Core 2 Duo, up to 2GB of of memory, and a shiny new copy of Windows Vista Basic or Home Premium pre-installed.

3 X-Series

Get online anytime

■ Hopping online on your mobile is now affordable with 3's new X-Series service. You can surf the net, use MSN Messenger, make Skype calls, buy and sell on eBay, and access your PCs files on your mobile. Subscription starts from $20 per month.

Email us feedback@vistamag.com.au

Do this...

Movies, music, games and more!

WATCH THE NEWS ON THE GO...

...Keep yourself informed with video podcasts

Australia is currently suffering a public transport crisis with Sydney and Melbourne copping the brunt of the flak. Peak hour travel is becoming more congested and delays are getting longer. Pulling out the daily newspaper is now more of a hassle than an ideal way to pass the time.

So what options do Australians have to keep themselves informed without feeling like they're part of a big game of twister? Enter the video podcast. We can now watch the news on the trip home rather than read it. All you have to do is download it on your PC. You can then either move it to your MP3 player or watch it on your laptop.

The Nine Network is responsible for putting the news on your MP3 player, calling the service Nine News Now Podcasting. It's available from the ninemsn website after 4pm AEST every weekday and is free of charge.

With Internet Explorer 7 (IE7) in Windows Vista, you can now get all your RSS feeds through your browser without having to download additional reader software. If a website has RSS feeds, the orange symbol will light up in IE7. To subscribe to a feed, just click on the symbol, pick your feed, and hit the subscribe button. You can then save the news bulletins to your MP3 player, or keep them on your laptop, and watch them effortlessly on your trip home from work. No matter how crowded your journey home is, you will now always be able to keep on top of the news.

AT A GLANCE
Nine News Now Podcasting
Web www.news.ninemsn.com.au
Price Free
Available Now

Watching your news saves paper – but you can do more to go green Page 74

BMW is planning to add streaming video and music capabilities to its range of cars via satellite technology

WE LIKE

Our news short

Not everyone endures a commute that's more than 30 minutes to and from work. The Nine News Now podcasts last less than 15 minutes, ensuring you're well informed by the time you get home.

EASY INFO Video podcasts could end the struggle with papers on packed trains

ALSO HAPPENING...

Movies, music, games and more events to enjoy

Get inside

■ Look inside the human body at the Amazing Human Body exhibition. Real dissected human bodies reveal what we're really like deep down. For more info, visit www.amazinghumabody.com.au.

Re-mastered

■ Listen to a re-mastered version of your favourite song by up-and-coming bands at Audi's www.ttremastered.com. Three new renditions will be released in April, including the Happy Mondays' Step On.

See it

■ Run to the movies for what are sure to be two of the biggest releases of the year. *Spiderman 3* launches on May 3rd while *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End* hits screens on May 24th.

Email us feedback@vistamag.com.au

ME AND MY COMPUTER

Gary Rolfe

The polar explorer explains the importance of robust PC technology

As a dog musher and athlete, Gary Rolfe is no stranger to extreme conditions – his Arctic Ocean expeditions have confronted him with snowstorms and sub zero temperatures. As with most intrepid explorers, technology and communication come high on Gary's list of exploration essentials. "A laptop is vital for managing the complicated inventory involved in a polar expedition," explains Gary. "And then there's keeping in touch with friends and family via email and updating my web site with photos and accounts of my travels. However, powering up a laptop in these Arctic conditions can be tricky." Powering up is not Gary's only concern; the low temperatures can play havoc with electronic devices. "Water forming on defrosting equipment is a problem – I've had laptops short out and cause irreversible damage if I've dared to turn them on too soon."

Gary uses a ToughBook CF-18. "Last February my ToughBook survived 51° below zero on the Mackenzie River [Canada] – that's twice as cold as the summit of Everest. It was cold enough for me to throw a mug of boiling water into the air and watch it burst into ice crystals. The laptop fired less than two hours after being warmed up. That may not sound good to an office user, but it's impressive!"

> "The laptop fired less than two hours after warming up"

Gary obviously has a lot of faith in his ToughBook, in spite of all the detrimental effects the snow-bound terrain can have on a PC. "My tent is cramped with laptop taboos – dog hair, condensation, food and drink. Hermetically-sealed laptop keyboards, like the one on the ToughBook, are essential for this environment."

Gary is 41 and has clocked up over 10,000 miles by dog team in the Arctic. For more information on his exploits visit Gary's site, www.garyrolfe.com.

If there's one thing to know, it's this...

Change the volume

Access enhanced audio settings by **Right-clicking** the speaker in the far right-hand corner of the taskbar

Select **Sounds**, and under the Playback tab, click on the **Speakers** heading and click **Configure**

From here you can change surround settings and check that individual speakers are working as they should

Start an online radio station

Discover how to broadcast your music across the internet in issue four – on sale Wednesday 23 April. Subscribe on page 54 and save 44% off the cover price!

Want to buy a new laptop? Turn to our Best Buys section for advice Page 113

YOUR THREE-MINUTE GUIDE TO...

Understanding the jargon in PC brochures

Every year, the Academy Awards give Oscars to people who are really good at making stuff up. The people who write computer brochures must be gutted: while anyone can make up a story about a superhero, crafting prose for PC publicity is something only a special few can do.

Understanding a PC brochure is much like understanding the love of your life: one word can carry entire paragraphs of meaning. So when your beloved says "I'm fine" it may well mean "you've done something horrid, I don't know why I ever agreed to go out with you in the first place, and I wish you were dead".

The terms in PC brochures are equally loaded, but don't despair, because we know how to translate them. "Great for web surfing" means desperately underpowered, as does "expandable"; "advanced" means expensive, "no compromises" means really expensive and "high extreme performance" means really, really expensive. "Stylish" means it's made from horrible silver plastic, "stunning" means it's shiny, "enhanced connectivity" means it's got Wi-Fi, and in the case of laptops anything that includes the word "ultimate" means it weighs a ton and runs out of battery power after 10 minutes.

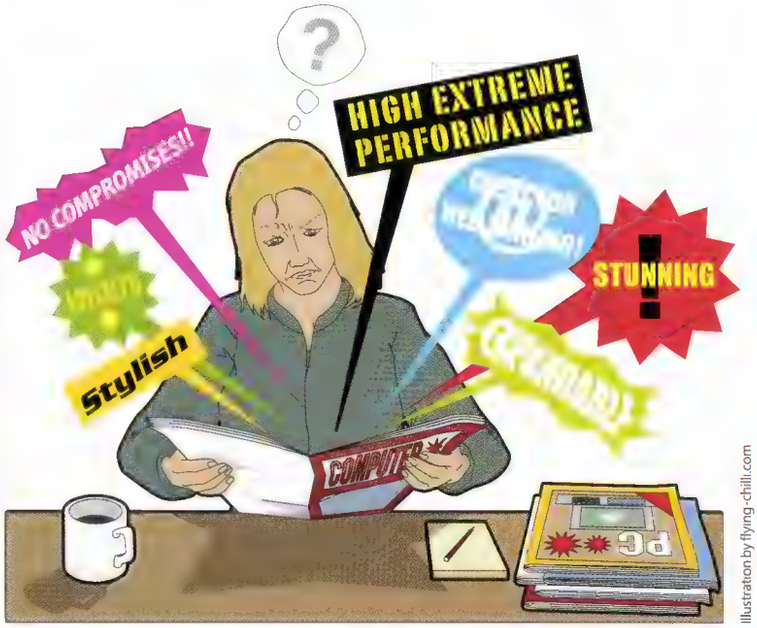


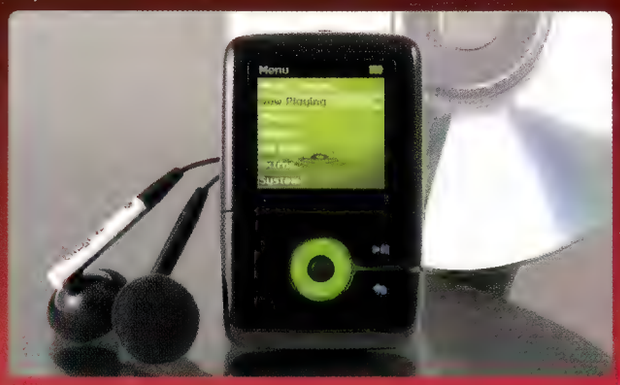
Illustration by flying-chilli.com

"Massive" memory means adequate memory, "fantastic" deals mean they're trying to offload old stock and "bundle" means a load of stuff you don't need – but worst of all, there's "this week only". If you don't buy it now you wont miss out. What it really means "it'll be 10 cents on Monday".

WE ASK YOU...

How many music tracks have you paid to download in the last 12 months?

- ❑ None
- ❑ 1-5
- ❑ 6-10
- ❑ 11-25
- ❑ 26-50
- ❑ Over 50



Take part in our poll by visiting our web site at www.vistamag.com.au/polls

SHARE YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Get the right mobile for Windows Vista

Q **"What's the best type of mobile phone to buy if I want to sync it with my contacts, calendar and other files on my Vista PC?**

A "There are lots of good smart phones on the market at the moment, and prices are starting to drop as well. If you have a Windows Vista PC, it makes sense to have a smart phone with the Windows Mobile operating system, as it has mobile versions of Microsoft Office applications. I use the HP iPAQ hw6965."
Ron Burgstrom

A "The Blackberry 8700 syncs well with Windows Vista. The QWERTY keyboard is especially handy for writing emails and adding to documents on the go."
Dominic Saddler

A "You should definitely opt for a smart phone running Windows Mobile 5.0 or the new 6.0. Dopod's D810 works really well, syncing flawlessly with Windows Vista. With 802.11g WiFi, and 3.5G HSDPA on board, it makes surfing the net and downloading documents super fast. And, of course, it looks good.
Brody Nicholls

NEXT MONTH

"Which MP3 player should I buy my fashion-conscious 16-year-old sister?"

Drop us a line with your words of wisdom, or pose those hard-to-answer questions for future issues.
feedback@vistamag.com.au
www.vistamag.com.au

Email us feedback@vistamag.com.au

7 reasons why... Your photos look rubbish

1 You pointed the camera into sunlight and melted the camera's lens, and your eyeballs. Take pics with the sun behind you and the subject in the shade. If the subject is lit too brightly, use the flash.

2 You've cut off your friend's head in the photo. Try to fill the camera's screen, but leave space around the subject to make up for your viewfinder not being 100 per cent accurate.

3 You were running to photograph a pack of runners, and the motion has made them look as though sweat landed on your lens. Stand still and follow the image.

4 The dog you were taking a photo of ran past so quickly the furry subject is missing. Push the shutter halfway, and wait for the green light before you take the shot.

5 The flash kicked in when you took a photo of a sunset and it looks like an alien invasion. Don't use flash; instead use night mode.

6 The camera's resolution is set to low detail to save memory and your printed pictures look as though someone has thrown up on to paper. Use the highest resolution each time.

7 Your friend looks as if she's possessed. Try not to use flash at night, but if you can't avoid it, clean up the image in Windows Photo Gallery using the Fix Red Eye function.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO...

Mobile phones

If it wasn't for science fiction, the mobile phone – the gadget we can't do without – would be pure fantasy

All hail the geek! You might make fun of such types who regularly attend sci-fi conventions – and perhaps, you'd be right to do so – but did you know that if it weren't for these people, the mobile phone might not even exist?

Confused? Well, we don't blame you, because it sounds like something out of science fiction itself. However, 34 years ago to this very month, Martin Cooper invented the mobile phone and claims that *Star Trek* is the thing that inspired him to create the device that has become ubiquitous in modern society. Allegedly, it was Captain Kirk's voice communicator that caught his attention.

Cooper made the first mobile communication in 1973, although it wasn't until about 10 years later that Motorola actually put the first mobile phone on to the market, at about $7,000, give or take a few bucks. With inflation, the Motorola DynaTAX 8000X, which sounds like something out of *Robocop*, was about 200 times more expensive than your average modern-day mobile phone, and you wouldn't have been able to stick it in your pocket, either. A decent-sized rucksack might have done the job, provided you didn't get a hernia in the process.

I AM 34

In a way, this obscene price tag was justified when you consider that, at the time, cordless house phones didn't even exist, let alone mobile ones. It was a status symbol to the rich yuppie during the eighties, but it became accessible to most normal folk in the mid-nineties, and by the 21st century a large chunk of the world's population owned one.

Such is the mobile phone's popularity nowadays, that it's not uncommon to find a house without a landline, the occupants instead choosing to rely entirely on their mobiles. Of course, you'll never lose a landline and it won't make its way into the bottom of a toilet after one too many beers, but it doesn't have many of the features of a mobile phone, and you can't take it with you when you leave the house.

By the way, if you're not convinced about the *Star Trek* link, you'll soon be able to buy a replica version of the communicator that actually works as a mobile phone.

Three to consider

1

LG KE970 Shine
Price $899
The Shine features a slick full-metal casing and 2.2-inch screen, but it's also packed with practical features, such as a camera lens and MP3 player.
www.lge.com.au

2

Nokia N73
Price $949
The Nokia N73 is ideal for listening to your tunes. It can hold 1,500 songs, has an FM radio, and built-in speakers, meaning your friends can listen, too.
www.nokia.com.au

3

Samsung BlackJack
Price $899
Powered by Windows Mobile 5.0, this super slim phone includes a full QWERTY keyboard, stereo MP3 player and XVGA widescreen display.
www.samsung.com.au

Turn to our 'Best buys' section to find our top five wireless net phones Page 111

THREE GAMES THAT...

Help you to increase your business acumen

Working for yourself is the new working for someone else. Everyone's at it, but you need to prepare – and what better way than to build up your entrepreneurial skills on the PC before risking it all in the real world? So get playing to see if you've got what it takes...

1 RESTAURANT EMPIRE

Don't try to take on Richard Branson at your first attempt. Start small. Restaurant Empire will show you the basics by using real-world business tactics to build up a successful franchise. If you can survive an ulcer-inducing fast-food restaurant, you can pretty much handle anything.

www.restaurant-empire.com

Business acumen ■■■

2 ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 3

Now it's time to move up a gear. We're sticking with the leisure industry, because the rewards are better, and in Rollercoaster Tycoon you'll learn key lessons in keeping your clientele happy, while coordinating resources and – most importantly – managing your staff.

www.atari.com/rollercoastertycoon

Business acumen ■■■■

3 X3: THE REUNION

Having conquered earth-bound catering, you're ready for a new challenge: interstellar trading. X3: The Reunion provides a solid grounding in the art of supply and demand, while tips on dealing with people trying to muscle in on your trade routes (shoot them) should come in handy.

www.egosoft.com

Business acumen ■■■■

YOURSPACE

The bit where you tell us what you've been using your PC for

"Keeping connected with others used to be tough, but now it's easy," says Derek Cross, a 30-year-old IT contractor.

"Most of my time is spent downloading music to my MP3 player, and storing and editing images taken on my digital camera, although I'm also using my PC to stay in close contact with my brother-in-law and his family who have recently emigrated," says Derek.

Although he hasn't quite made the jump to an internet phone just yet, Derek's now able to take advantage of some of the improved communication features in Windows Vista. "I had access to email and chat before, which worked OK, but it was a bit clunky," he explains. "Now, with Windows Live Messenger, it's a lot slicker and my family find it easier to send pictures and videos."

Derek used to find it difficult to connect contacts to his computer but he's also discovered that syncing his mobile phone and friends' or families' PDAs is a breeze. "Using Sync Center in Windows Vista, I can now set up multiple devices and clearly view and control what each one is doing at any time," he says.

Derek plans to convert his PC into a fully fledged entertainment PC and have TV shows, movies and music wirelessly streamed around his house to any device.

Tell us what you've been doing at feedback@vistamag.com.au

TIP OF THE MONTH

Get three different clocks for your taskbar

To keep an eye on the time in a variety of countries other than your own, click on the clock in the right-hand corner of the Windows Vista taskbar, select **Change date and time settings**, and click on the **Additional Clocks** tab to choose up to two extra clocks. To view them, hover over the taskbar clock or click on it to display the multiple time zones.

Page 78 Become a YouTube star, with the help of Windows Movie Maker

SMART SAVER

Make net phone calls

MONEY SAVED

$1287.00

PER ANNUM

Make unlimited free phone calls to anywhere in the world by using an internet phone. All you need is a compatible telephone and netphone software such as Windows Live Messenger or Skype. The people you're phoning will also need to have these set up at their end so that they can receive your call. If you regularly make lots of phone calls to friends and family abroad, then you'll be in for a substantial saving.

Figure based on a 30-minute call to the U.S. made three times per week with Telstra's HomeLine Budget plan using 0018 half-hours.

NOW SAVE MORE CASH
GET $6 OFF EVERY ISSUE
SEE PAGE 54 FOR MORE

HANDS-ON If current research is anything to go by, you could soon be using gestures to flick through data

NOW ON DVD

TECH ON THE SCREEN

Minority Report

Is the Tom Cruise character's 3D computer interface really such a far-fetched idea?

Steven Spielberg's 2002 futuristic thriller revolves around the idea of a police department using pre-cognitive humans to solve crimes before they've been committed. The visions of the pre-cogs are recorded, then played back and collated using a 3D virtual display.

The idea of breaking away from a 2D interface has been gathering pace for some time.

Sun Microsystems pre-empted *Minority Report* with its 'Starfire' concept in 1992. The video that accompanied it is cheesy but years ahead of its time, predicting conference video calls, the internet and a gestural interface. Wince through the movie at www.asktog.com/starfire/index.html.

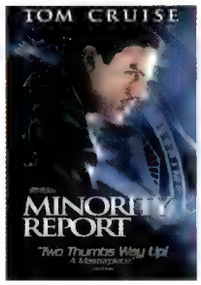
Starfire never came to pass, but Sun has another system in development. Project Looking Glass was first sighted in 2003.

> "In Project Looking Glass, files can be stacked like books, or browsed as with a physical object"

Footage shows how applications and files exist as 'slates' that can be flipped around to add notes on the back, stacked like books, or arranged and browsed as you would with a physical object. It's easier to show it than explain, so go to: www.sun.com/software/looking_glass/demo.xml.

Microsoft did a study into the subject in 1999 with Task Gallery. You could walk along hallways lined with tasks or enter rooms that might be themed depending on the files stored there. Its heritage lives on in Aero Flip 3D, which enables you to browse through open apps, like riffling though a deck of cards.

Finally, researchers at New York City University have developed a multi-touch screen that uses gestures to manipulate information, such as resizing pictures or playing with lumps of lava lamp goo. You can see what what they've discovered by going to cs.nyu.edu/~jhan/ftirtouch.



BUY IT
The film is out now on DVD, priced $23.

Read more about future technology, including brain implants Page 52

Don't use Vista™ without me!

Transfer your photos, MP3s, contacts, email and settings from your Windows XP PC...

...to your new Windows Vista™ PC with Belkin's Easy Tranfer Cable

Easy Transfer Cable for Windows Vista™

Don't leave your treasured memories and settings on your old PC, transfer them to your new Windows Vista™ PC with the Easy Transfer Cable. It's as simple as plugging the cable into the USB ports on both PCs and then letting the Windows Vista™ software do the rest! Transfer all your photos, MP3s, contacts, email messages, plus security, Internet and email settings.

BELKIN

Easy and other solutions now available from leading retailers

For information 1800 235 546 www.belkin.com/anz

CERTIFIED FOR Windows Vista

THE LOWDOWN
BitTorrent

What is it?
BitTorrent is a file sharing system that allows you to download really big files quickly and easily.

How does it work?
Instead of downloading a file directly from another person's computer to yours, one person has the file and lets others download chunks of it bit by bit, and each chunk that a person downloads, is then passed on to the next person, and so on and so forth. It's a bit like a daisy chain.

What's so good about it?
If lots of are people are downloading a file, the chances of you being able to jump on days or weeks after it comes out and get it, are much greater than trying to seek out that one person who has the complete file.

Can I download anything I want then?
Not quite. There are illegal torrents out there, but the BitTorrent community is maturing with age. The BitTorrent Entertainment Network has recently been announced, and will allow the download of movies for as little as $5 a head.

OK, where do I start?
You'll need a BitTorrent client program to download torrents. You can get the official one at www.bittorrent.com, but we also like uTorrent from www.utorrent.com. Once you've installed it, you can click on .torrent links on sites and it'll open the program. You can stack up a list of programs and then minimise the window so you can use your PC while they're downloading. If you're looking for things to download, then there's plenty at www.bittorrent.com.

Miniature printers minus the ink

Putting the ink into the paper means tiny printers you can take anywhere

Anyone remember the ZX Spectrum? You know, Clive Sinclair's revolutionary home computer. OK, so did any of you have the small thermal printer that plugged into the back? When the print head produced a spark, the heat created a dark spot on the aluminised paper – and with enough dots you could create letters and numbers.

Today's traditional printers use anywhere from four to eight print cartridges that squirt gobs of ink on to paper – and while you can buy special shiny photo paper, they'll print on pretty much anything flat, thin and paper-like.

Inkless printing

The downside, of course, is that the printers are huge; not only do they have to accommodate sheets of A4 paper, but they also need to house the aforementioned ink cartridges.

But what if the ink was in the paper? Then all you'd need was a suitable print head, and you could make printers as small as the ZX Printer, maybe even smaller. Well, say hello to Zink (as in 'zero ink') Imaging, a company that's developed printer paper containing three layers of crystalline dye – one yellow, one red and one blue. As the heated print head passes over the paper, the layers change from a crystalline to amorphous state and change colour in the process. On cooling, the crystals remain in their amorphous state and retain the colour.

The clever part is that the separate layers change colour depending on the temperature of the print head and length of time in contact with the paper. So as the print head scans across the paper it can create discrete blue, yellow and red pixels – enough to generate a full colour image.

Not only does the technology work, but it creates 5x7.5-cm photos at a resolution of 300dpi (dots per inch) that are water resistant, durable and even recyclable. And it's cheap, too: the first demo unit is no bigger than a large PDA and costs US$99 ($122). It receives images wirelessly from a camera phone via Bluetooth and its battery can be recharged over a USB connection. Zink paper costs US$20 ($26) for a sheet of 100, which works out at just 25 cents per sheet.

HANDHELD Zink is making printers that fit in your palm

INSTANT SNAPS This digital camera has a full colour printer built in

Instant snaps

But even cooler than the portable printer is the potential to have a camera with a printer built in. Zink already has one in development that will cost around US$200 ($245). Print quality remains to be seen, but it should be much slicker than Polaroid.

At the moment, Zink is very much targeting the portable market but if the technology catches on, and the images are of good enough quality, there's no reason why it couldn't make it into desktop printers. Imagine never having to buy ink again. Not only will it save you money, but the environment will be a little greener too.

For more latest gadgets and gizmos visit our digital bedroom Page 48

TOP TENS

What you're buying

MUSIC DOWNLOADS

For a second month in a row, Silverchair takes the No.1 download spot. *[Source: ARIA Top 40 Digital Track Chart]*

Position	Title	Last month
1	**Straight Lines** *Silverchair*	1
2	**How to Save a Life** *The Fray*	2
3	**The Sweet Escape** *Gwen Stefani*	4
4	**Lips of an Angel** *Hinder*	3
5	**Grace Kelly** *Mika*	-
6	**Chasing Cars** *Snow Patrol*	9
7	**Light Surrounding You** *Evermore*	8
8	**What Goes Around...** *Justin Timberlake*	5
9	**Say it Right** *Nelly Furtado*	10
10	**This Ain't a Scene, It's an Arms Race** *Fall Out Boy*	6

GAMES

Following the recent launch of the Sony PlayStation 3, the console's games grab the top spots. *[Source: GfK]*

Position	Title	Last month
1	**Resistance: Fall of Man (PS3)**	-
2	**Motorstorm (PS3)**	-
3	**Formula 1 Championship Edition (PS3)**	-
4	**Call of Duty (PS3)**	-
5	**Final Fantasy XII (PS3)**	-
6	**Need for Speed Carbon (PS3)**	-
7	**Ridge Racer 7 (PS3)**	-
8	**Fight Night Round 3 (PS3)**	-
9	**STALKER: Shadow of Chernobyl (PC/Mac)**	-
10	**The Sims 2: Seasons (PC/Mac)**	-

DVD SALES

Bond shoots his way to the top, scaring off everyone from last month's chart bar a large toilet cleaner. *[Source: Sanity]*

Position	Title	Last month
1	**James Bond: Casino Royale**	-
2	**Borat**	-
3	**Delirious**	-
4	**Open Season**	-
5	**Step Up**	-
6	**Jackass Number Two: The Movie (Uncut)**	-
7	**The Departed**	-
8	**Kenny**	2
9	**Smallville: Season 5**	-
10	**Little Miss Sunshine**	-

PC HOME SOFTWARE

Position	Title	Last month
1	**Norton Internet Security 2007**	1
2	**Microsoft Office 2007 Professional (Ac)**	2
3	**PC-Cillin Internet Security 2007 (Ac)**	3
4	**Microsoft Office 2007 (Ac)**	4
5	**Norton Antivirus 2007**	6
6	**PC-Cillin Internet Security 2007 (3U)**	9
7	**Windows Live OneCare Internet Security**	8
8	**Norton Internet Security 2007 (3U)**	5
9	**PC-Cillin Internet Security 2007 (3U Upgrade)**	10
10	**Windows Vista Home Premium Upgrade (Ac)**	-

Subscribe www.vistamag.com.au/subs

Discover the next generation of PC gaming with Crysis

For years, new shooters were all about a few extra vehicles here, a few more guns there. Now DirectX 10 has created a new way to play. **By Jon Hicks**

How best to face an army outpost? You could whip out your sniper rifle, pick off the bloke in the guard hut, then flank round the back while the others close in on your position. You could leap on to the roof of a hut, smash your way in through the roof and take out guards as they run in. Or – according to Cevat Yerli from developer Crytek – you can turn your gun on the nearest tree, snatch up the fallen trunk and use it as cover as you crawl forwards unnoticed, then bash the nearest guard on the head and pinch his truck. "You can finish the game without killing anybody," Cevat assures us. "It's about choice... this is a game where you can interact meaningfully with everything in the world."

Got the look

One of the first games to use DirectX 10, the gaming technology built into Windows Vista, Crysis is also one of the most impressive. Thrown into a US/North Korean spat in the South China Sea, you're equipped with a cyber-suit that enables the aforementioned leaping, along with speed boosts and the ability to be partially invisible – and it's made jaw-droppingly beautiful by the hi-tech back-end in Windows Vista. "It actually gives a new experience derived from the upgrade to DirectX 10," explains Cevat. "You'll have inherently better gameplay."

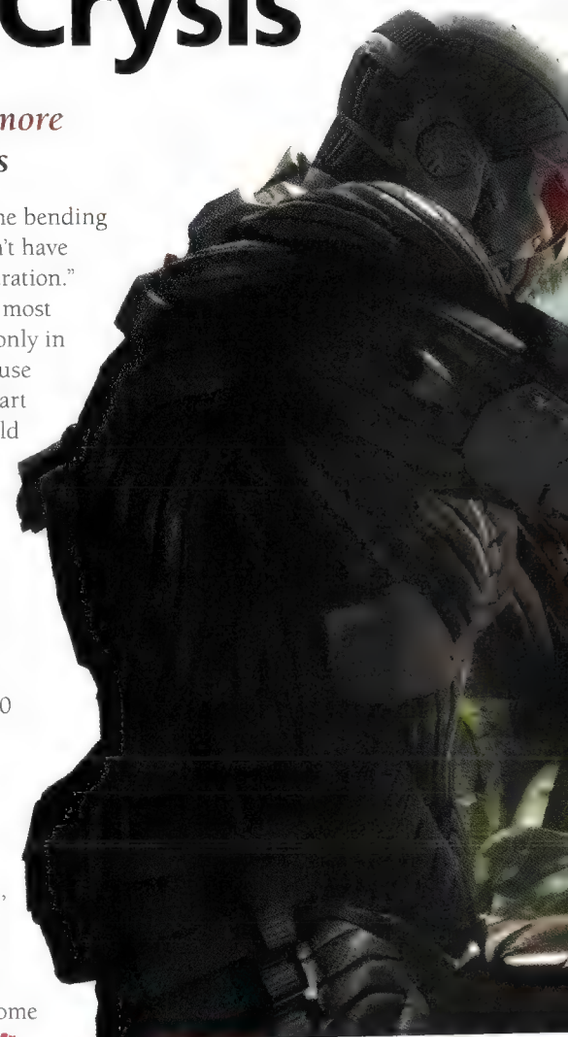
Out of the box, Crysis is plenty impressive, even on older versions of Windows. You and the suit save the day more or less single-handedly in the face of spookily intelligent enemies. Taking your own path through each of the vast levels, you can grab anything from guards – who can be used as unwilling shields and even more unwilling projectiles – to items in the world (we spent a fun half-hour bringing down a helicopter by throwing oil drums at it).

Multiplayer magic

Step up to DirectX 10 on Windows Vista and it looks better still, but it's in multiplayer that Crysis really shines. Crytek has added an extra, Windows Vista-only multiplayer mode that actually changes the game. Finding other players isn't a matter of waiting for them to blunder into view: you can see grass rustling as they crawl through it, lingering dust clouds from recent fights and other signs of activity. Cevat explains, "Everybody is forced to think about the battleground, the time of day, the way the grass bends – if you lay on the grass the bending is synchronised. We can't have that on the current generation."

At the moment, these most impressive features are only in multiplayer modes because making it an essential part of the single-player would leave the Windows XP players behind. But Cevat is looking forward to when Windows Vista hits the mainstream, as it'll be possible to add further improvements through patches when DirectX 10 becomes the norm.

"We are literally introducing next-gen online gaming here," he beams. "For the first time in the last 10 years, a graphic upgrade has actually created new gameplay." Look out for the first instalment to come at the end of this year.



Choose your tactic

The Crysis super-suit gives you lots of different ways of surprising your enemies, depending on the situation

OUT OF SIGHT Near invisibility means you can creep past guards unnoticed – or get close enough to grab them. You can then drag them along as a shield or throw them aside

LEMMING-LIKE Up your strength and you can leap tall buildings in a single bound. It doesn't last long enough to bunnyhop to victory, but you can escape to higher ground. Or just break out a quick speed boost and sprint away

GUNG-HO If all the above is a bit too subtle, then do it the old-fashioned way. Switch to Armour and you get a bit of extra protection against incoming injury, so you can wade in and start shooting

MIX AND MATCH The best tactic, of course, is to pick an approach that most suits the situation. Let the moment carry you, and just make sure you've got a really big gun in case it all gets messy

Motor mashing

Vehicles take a lot of punishment in Crysis. Open fire and you'll see windows break and shatter, tyres pop, flames start creeping from ruptured fuel tanks – given enough damage it'll blow up. Alternatively, you could just get in and drive it away.

On your free DVD

To help you get even more from your Windows Vista PC, we've included a fantastic selection of programs on this issue's DVD – the highlights are discussed on the next four pages. Install and enjoy! **By Damian Francis**

Bid your way to a bargain, and so much more this month

Online auction success isn't hard with a little bit of help...

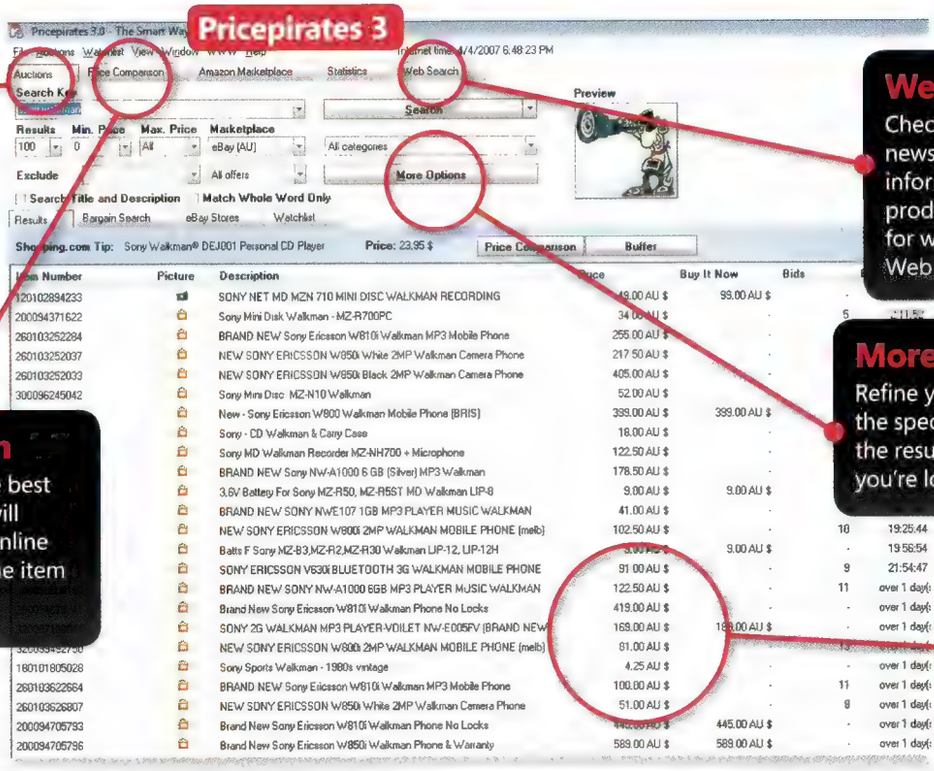
Online auctions like eBay are serious business for some. Average Joe Officeworker's story about throwing down his keyboard and phone in revolt and storming out of the office to start up his own eBay business not uncommon.

Then there's Jane Doe, who sits in front of her computer day in and day out, monitoring a range of bids. She's determined to outbid everyone she can for a product she doesn't really want. Despite power users like these, there is still plenty of room for everyone else to get involved, and its safer and easier than ever before.

Safer because payment systems like PayPal provide secure ways to buy and sell items, and an easy way to resolve any disputes with the people you're dealing with. There are also buyer and seller ratings, meaning that dodgy dealers will soon be discovered and outed. Auction sites like eBay have also implemented restrictive policies to protect their users.

It's easier than ever to get involved in online auctions thanks to a range of software that saves you time and helps you track down quality auctions. On this months DVD you will find some of that software. OpenAuctionTicker appears in a small window at he bottom of your screen and keeps you informed about auctions you're following. Pricepirates 3 compares the eBay price to shopping websites so you can be sure you're getting a good deal. There's also Lost Auction, an application that could find you a bargain. Sellers aren't always great spellers, so once you tell it what you want, it will search for mis-typed listings.

There's plenty more on this months DVD. Perhaps you would like to go free-style skiing, or get rid of spam forever? In your spare time you could also turn your old webcam into a high-tech security device. There's tonnes to do, so dig in!



Auctions
Find the item you're looking for without having to open your web browser and log onto to eBay.

Price Comparison
Are you really getting the best deal? Price Comparison will locate the same item at online stores so you can see if the item really is a bargain.

Web Search
Check out the latest news, reviews and information about the product you're looking for with Pricepirates Web Search.

More Options
Refine your search by selecting the specific values that will limit the results to only the items you're looking for.

Total Price
Pricepirates gives you the product's price, the shipping price and the total so you'll never be surprised.

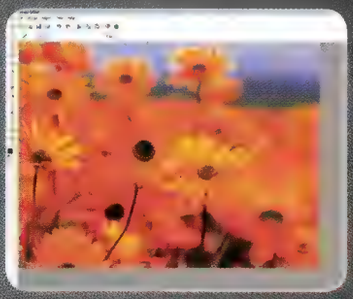
GAMES Go to war safely

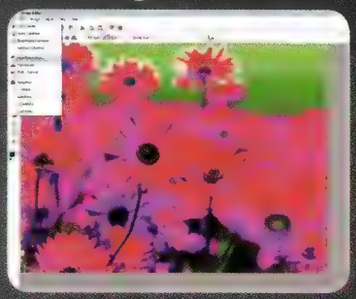
Europa Universalis III Take control of one of 250 young nations and turn it into a great global empire.

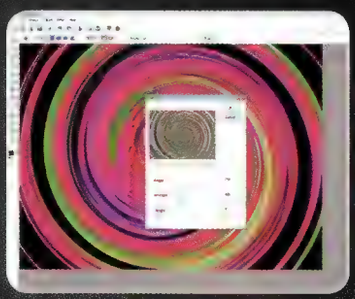
Supreme Commander Jump into the 37th century. Your mission is to end the Infinite War and control the universe.

Medieval II: Total War The latest game of the best-selling Total War Series plunges you into 11th century Europe.

MEMORIES PC Image Editor







Edit images from a variety of files including bitmap, jpeg and TGA files. The user-friendly interface will allow you adjust and manipulate your image with ease. You can even turn any of your photos into perfectly sized desktop wallpapers to keep your memories close by.

PLUS!

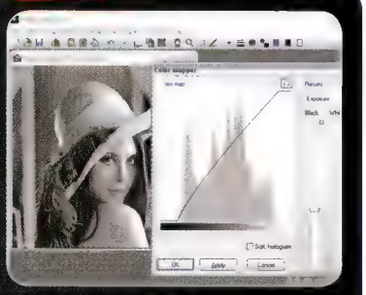
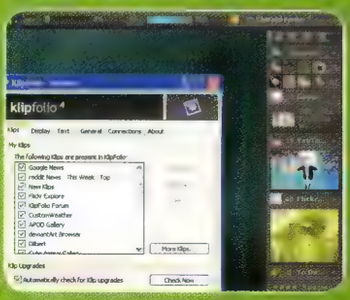
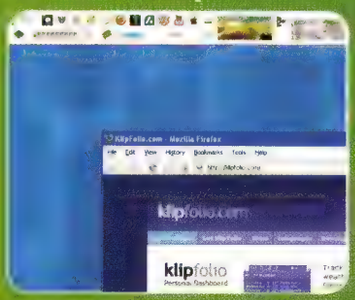


IMAGE ANALYZER A beast of an image editor, this program contains the most image enhancement features found in conventional photo editors. There are also many more advanced options to sink your teeth into.

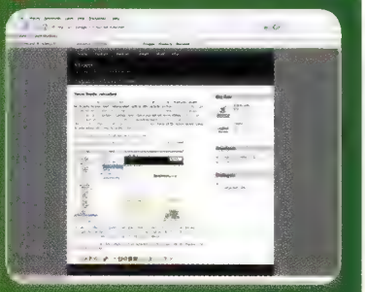
COMUNICATIONS KlipFolio





This is the world's smallest and most configurable personal dashboard. You can use it to monitor almost anything online, from stocks and shares to your email. There are over 4,000 klips available to download and it will all tuck away nicely in the corner of your screen.

PLUS!



NOVOBOT News, news and more news. There's so much news here you'll never have an excuse not to be informed. Browse headlines, search for articles, or even download your stories so you can read it offline when your're on the go.

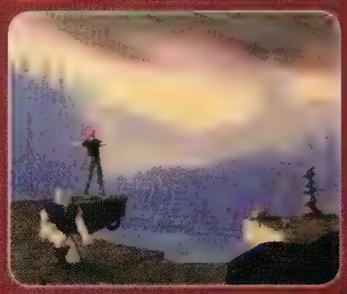
Also on your disc

This issue's DVD is packed with programs to make Windows Vista work for you

GAMES Freak Out – Extreme Freeride

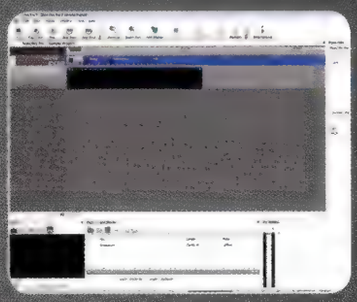
Too tired after work to hit the slopes for some extreme skiing? Or perhaps you're like most Australians – nowhere near snow! Freak Out – Extreme Freeride brings the adrenaline rush of extreme downhill skiing to your desktop. Pull off extreme moves without the risk of breaking your legs!

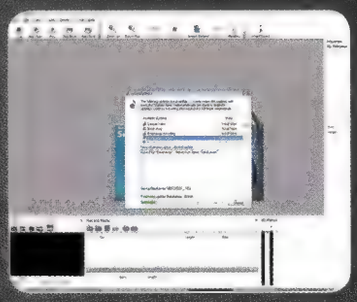
PLUS!

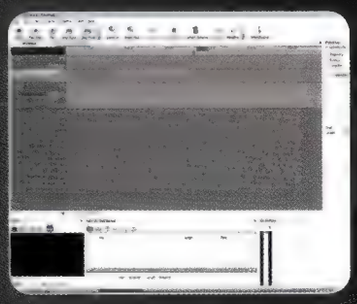


ANOTHER WORLD Take a step back in gaming history. Revisit this classic 1991 game that sold over one million copies with the 15th Anniversary Edition. It's completely redone in full HD and has a remix of the original soundtrack.

MUSIC SonicFire Pro 4

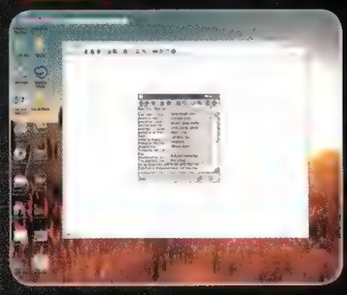






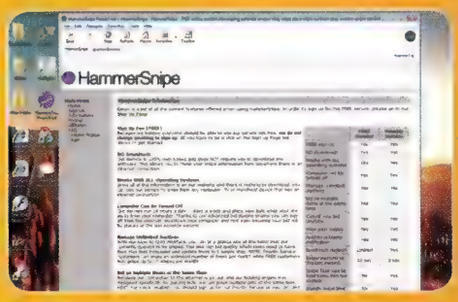
Create the perfect music score to your next blockbuster (or home movie) with SonicFire Pro 4. There are thousands of tracks in the SmartSound Library to use and the software will customize the song to fit your scene perfectly. We hear Steven Spielberg's been looking over his shoulder since its release.

PLUS!

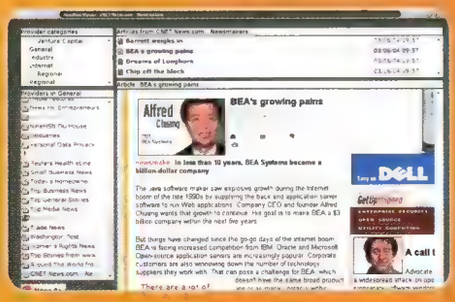


EVIL LYRICS Play your songs and have the lyrics automatically searched for and displayed in a small window. You can also save the lyrics for those times you feel like breaking into song with some good old karaoke.

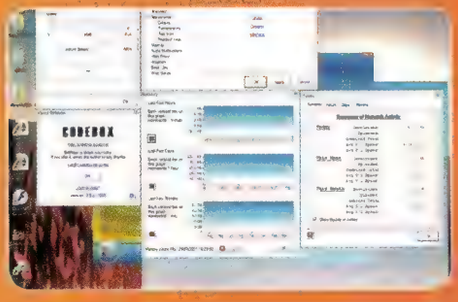
COMMUNICATIONS More content, fewer clicks



HAMMERSNIPE POWERTOOL Give yourself the best chance of winning online auctions in one click.



HEADLINE VIEWER View all the latest news headlines from a variety of different websites without your web browser.

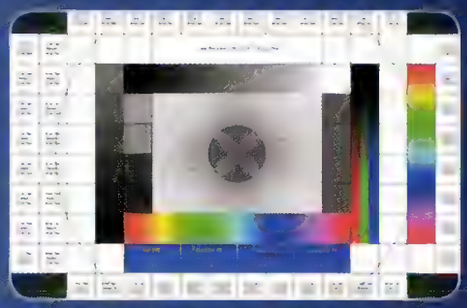


BITMETER 2 Control your web use quickly and simply. See your upload and download speeds and set data limit alerts.

MEMORIES Look like a superstar

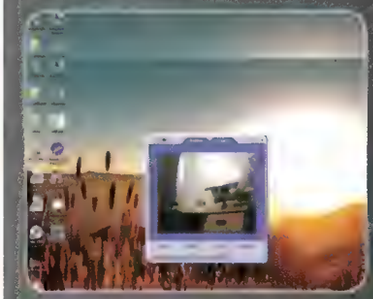
CLEANSKINFX Retouch your photos automatically, removing red eyes, pimples and more.

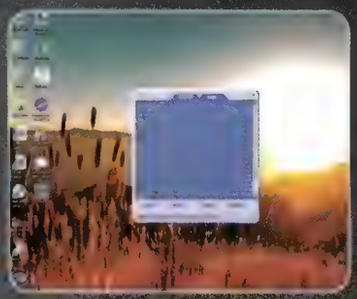
PHOTOBIE This advanced photo editing software has multilayer support and supports many Photoshop filters.



TESTSCREEN Put your monitor through its paces. Test it for sharpness, convergence, brightness and more.

TV & MOVIES Watcher



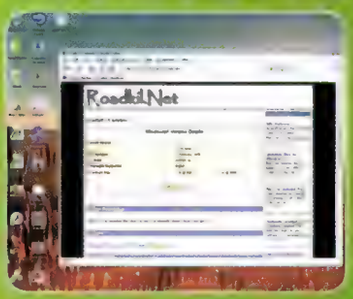


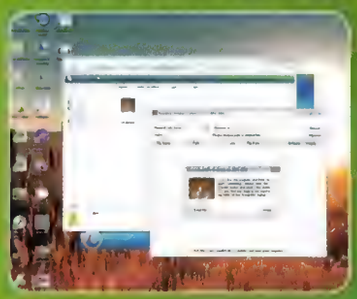
Keep an eye on your house by turning your webcam and PC into high-tech surveillance devices. Watcher includes motion detection, video and audio logging, broadcasting and more. Video clips can be highly compressed to store more video in less space. You can also remotely stream your videos.

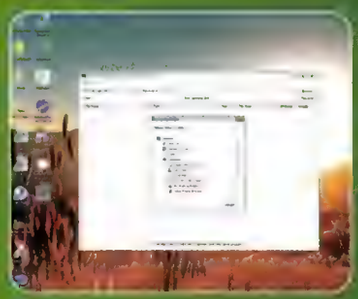
PLUS!

FWINK Have your webcam take pictures at timed intervals and automatically put them on your website. You can add effects like text messages or time stamps as well as superimpose an image or logo on top of your webcam's pictures.

PRODUCTIVITY Roadkil Undelete







Mother may have told you not to play with the trash but now you can rifle threw the entire can without getting your hands dirty. Roadkil Undelete will do it for you. Salvage files you accidentally deleted after realising that they were more precious than life itself.

PLUS!

SHREDDER Once you've saved the files more important than life itself, delete the ones that could potentially harm your beautiful existence. Shredder will make sure not even nosey software like Roadkil Undelete can salvage them.

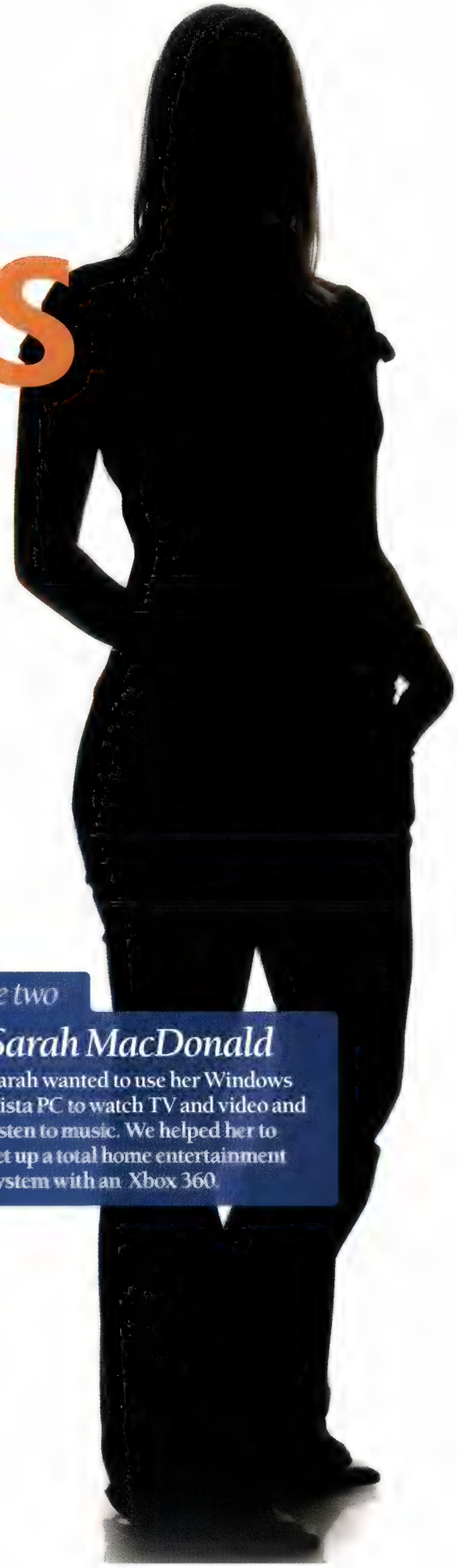
Problems with the disc?

Email us at coverdisc@vistamag.com.au for help and support

The WINDOWS VISTA experience

Part three

In the third and final part of our guide to getting started with Windows Vista, we tackle mobility and business use



Issue two

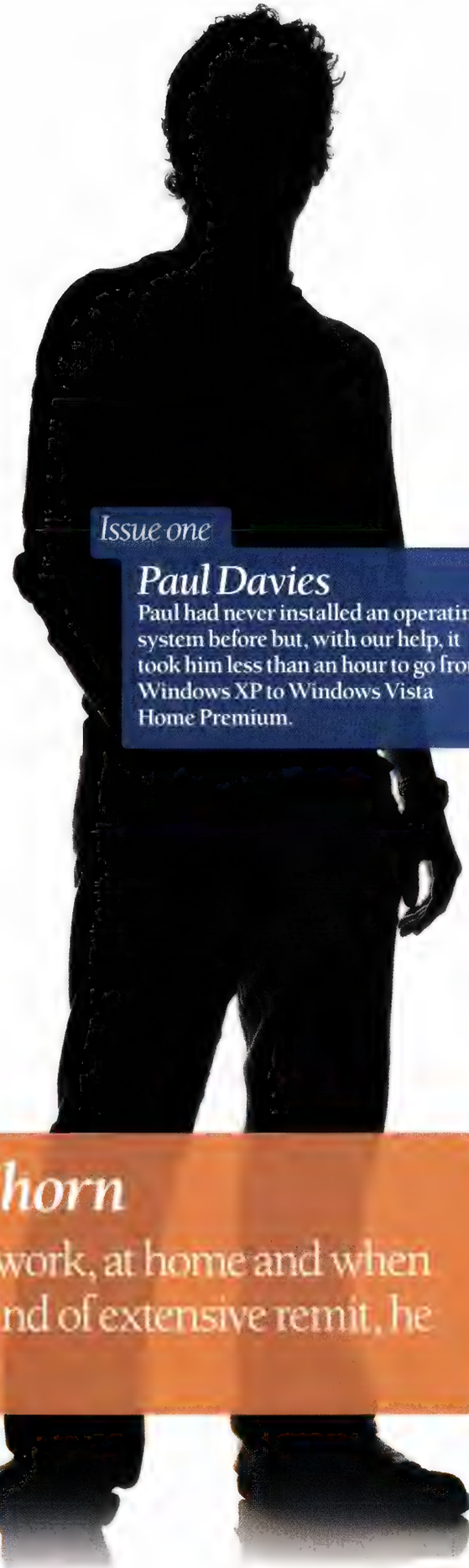
Sarah MacDonald

Sarah wanted to use her Windows Vista PC to watch TV and video and listen to music. We helped her to set up a total home entertainment system with an Xbox 360.

Mark Thorn, the 'road warrior.' "Erm, I'm not sure whether mucking around with PowerPoint when I commute makes me Mad Max," he grins. Mark, 28, spends a lot of time travelling. His job is in sales, and thus his laptop (complete with coffee stains) is almost his life. Whether at home or in the office, it's his primary computer – it houses his email, his documents and his contacts. It's also home to Mark's music and photo collection, and doubles up as a portable DVD player. We try not to comment on the *Men Behaving Badly* disc that's in the drive... "I'm working most of the time," he assures us. "But sometimes I just need a break."

So, it's clear which version of Windows Vista would best suit our road warr... uh, mobile computer user. Ultimate edition might cost more than Business edition, but because it also contains Home Premium edition's heavy hitters, such as Windows Media Center and Windows DVD Maker, it means Mark's laptop will do everything he needs it to, both in terms of organisation and entertainment.

"I pretty much know what I'm doing with PCs, but Windows Vista is a new one on me," he tells us. "Just point out the best bits of it and I'll have a proper play with them when



Issue one

Paul Davies

Paul had never installed an operating system before but, with our help, it took him less than an hour to go from Windows XP to Windows Vista Home Premium.

This issue: Mark Thorn

Mark uses his computer at work, at home and when he's commuting. For this kind of extensive remit, he needs the Ultimate edition.

you're gone."

In Mark's case, the best bits are very different from those we showed to our last two Windows Vista taker-uppers (see issues one and two). Mark's paramount consideration is communication – whether that's synchronising contacts and messages from and to his phone, or having the right tools to make a successful presentation to a group of colleagues or clients. So, the

The first order of the day is to connect Mark's touch-screen mobile phone

first order of the day is to connect his phone, a touch-screen mobile phone running Windows Mobile 5, to his PC. In simple terms, it's half-phone, half-portable PC, with a high resolution screen, wireless networking and Bluetooth built-in and rigged up for email, web browsing and document tinkering.

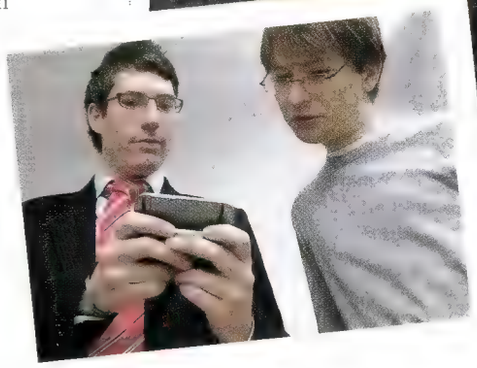
He's already got Microsoft Office 2007 installed on his PC, with his vast archive of email and contacts now ensconced in Outlook. Traditionally, back in the days of Windows XP, he used Microsoft ActiveSync to 'synchronise' his phone and PC, but with Windows Vista he's got the Windows Mobile Device Center, a much smarter take on the concept – which, incidentally, is available on all Windows Vista editions.

"Ah, first problem," says Mark. "I can't find the CD that came with the phone, and the PC needs the disc to recognise it." We decide to take a bit of gamble, and connect the phone to the PC with its USB cable anyway. Mercifully, Windows Vista works out that it's a Windows Mobile device, and checks Windows Update for the software it needs.

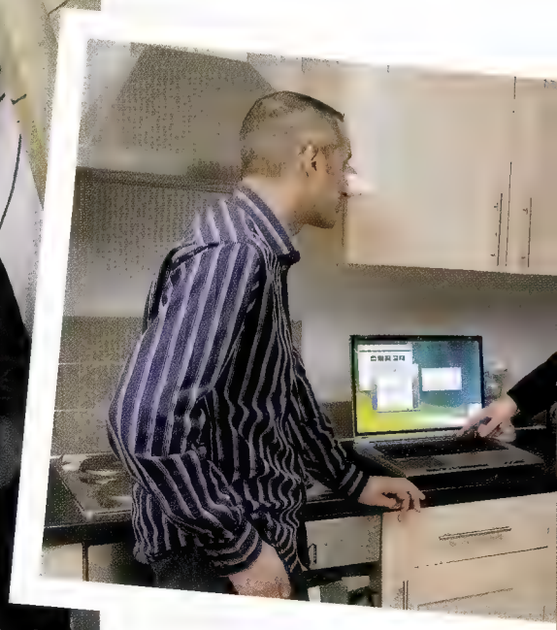
Windows Mobile Device Center takes a bit of time to install, and then refuses to connect to the phone. Some shouting and one system restart later, and we're presented with Windows Mobile Device Center's minimalist options screen. By clicking on **Mobile Device Settings**, Mark gets to choose what he wants to be copied to the phone whenever he plugs it into the PC. In his case, it's pretty much everything – inbox, contacts, calendars, notes he left for himself in Outlook. He's got a few too many old emails to copy them all over, though – there's limited storage space on the phone, plus the sync will take forever if it all goes over at once. Clicking on **Sync settings ➜ Email** lets him place restrictions – shortly, the phone's configured to only sync emails under 5kb, ignore attachments, and just take messages from the last five days.

Particularly pleasing to Mark, though, is a less business-orientated trick up Windows Mobile Device Center's sleeve – it'll also copy from the phone, so any photos and videos he's taken with its built-in camera are automatically copied to the PC whenever it's synching. Windows Photo Gallery will even pop up at this point and give him the option to add tags to the pics if he wants.

IT'S A DEAL When we promise not to flog tea towels, Mark agrees to let us show him Windows Vista Ultimate



CALL CONNECT Mark sets up his phone to sync certain emails



KITCHEN CONNECTION Mark's already familiar with the basics of Windows Vista but he's not so sure about how it will work with his mobile phone

Laptop extras

Before Mark gets sucked into replying to the several dozen emails that have arrived during the time we've spent setting up the phone, we drag him over to the Windows Mobility Center. This is a new element in Windows Vista that's only accessible on laptops. (It crops up in Home Premium and Business editions of the operating system, too, but it has more features than Home and, of course, in Ultimate Mark gets all the entertainment stuff, as well.)

The Mobility Center is essentially

Keep your PC safe with Bitlocker

Proof that Catch-22 situations can be a good thing to

Windows Vista Ultimate Edition's ace in the hole is Bitlocker. This is a technology designed to make your Windows drive entirely inaccessible to hackers and unauthorised users. Everything on the drive is encrypted, so, for instance, someone who's nicked your laptop can't burrow through the Windows file system unless you've given them access. If they don't know your user account password, they can't access any files and, because the whole drive is encrypted, unless they already know that password, they

SYNC TO FIT Once Mark sets out the configuration restraints he requires, Windows Mobile Device Manager makes short work of transferring emails to his phone

ALL ABOUT IMAGE Mark then discovers that the Windows Mobile Device Center has copied over photos and videos from his phone, too

a svelte collection of functions generally only accessed from a laptop, but all within one interface, rather than spread into confusing corners across the length and breadth of the operating system. What's actually in there is dependent upon the laptop itself – as Mark's system is an older, more basic model, advanced stuff like screen brightness and orientation isn't in there. Expect laptops made specifically for the Windows Vista age to support the whole gamut and potentially even more – manufacturers have the option to add more 'panes' to the Mobility Center if they so choose.

What Mark's laptop does have, however, are one-click tools to muck around with volume, power settings, syncing to the phone and to hook it up to an external screen. At home, he's got a big, expensive widescreen monitor that he plugs the laptop into to watch DVDs.

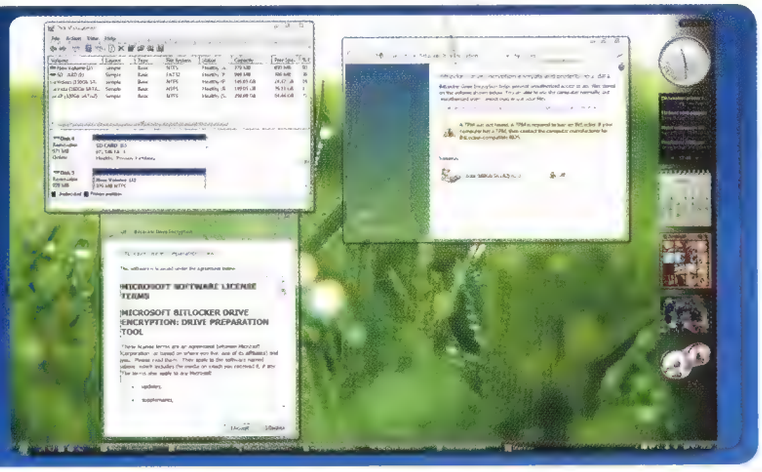
"It was a nightmare getting the laptop to recognise the other monitor in Windows XP," he says. "I had to go into all these menus, and usually do a restart." It's a lot easier now. A double-click on the battery icon in the system, a push of the Windows flag key and X or typing 'mobility' into the search bar in the Start menu brings up Windows Mobility Center.

SCREEN TO SCREEN Connecting the laptop to Mark's cinema-friendly display is a very easy process

We look at Mark expectantly. He plugs in the VGA cable from his monitor with a doubtful expression on his face. Windows Vista makes the flat dinging noise that means it's found new hardware, and pops up a dialogue box announcing that it's spotted the monitor. Mark then gets to choose whether the secondary display clones or extends his existing desktop. The latter's the preferable option when he has the laptop connected to a projector or plasma display during meetings, as he can fire a PowerPoint presentation out to one display, but keep stuff like

can't use any underhand trickery to hack into files and discover your password. It's a cunning Catch 22 that means your important information is totally safe, even if you were never to recover the computer itself, you can rest assured that the data will not be touched. If there's anything out of the ordinary during system startup, Bitlocker will lock down the whole PC, and only a specific password will open it back up again.

The trouble is that Bitlocker requires a PC to have something called Trusted Platform Module (TPM) to work – and that's a hardware element only available on very recent machines, rather than something that can be installed on older ones. Once this TPM is installed as standard though, it's going to be a massive relief to business users like Mark here, who often carry a laptop full of sensitive company data in public places.



YOU'RE BARRED If they haven't got the password down, they're not coming in

icons and application windows hidden from everyone else.

Even better for such corporate shenanigans is Presentation Mode, an element of Mobility Center that crops up in the Premium, Business and Ultimate editions of Windows Vista. Mark's somewhat prone to decorating his desktop with pictures of scantily-clad ladies. "There was one meeting when I accidentally flashed a huge picture of Angelina Jolie onto a three metre screen," he admits. Presentation Mode, in a nutshell, prevents any of Windows' um... features from crashing the party when it's turned on – which is done just by clicking **Turn On** under

"At one meeting I accidentally flashed a huge picture of Angelina Jolie"

Presenting in the Mobility Center. There'll be no system or status pop-ups or noises, the screensaver won't kick in and the volume's set to a sensible level. Mark even gets to specify a special work-safe desktop background. "I've gone for bamboo – that's safe enough, isn't it?"

There's one more setting to show Mark in the Mobility Center before we move on. He's complained a couple of times that his laptop battery doesn't last long enough for some of his more nightmarish train journeys and, in all honesty, Windows Vista's Aero interface and beady eye watching out for threats and problems are likely to make matters worse. That's where the Battery status pane in the Mobility Center comes in. There's a choice of three power settings – Performance, Balanced and Saver. Performance means applications will load and run with a bit more zip, while Saver throttles things a bit so the battery lasts longer – the Balanced setting is, er, between the two. Mark's best off using Performance when his laptop's plugged in, and Saver whenever he's on the move. The Saver mode deactivates the Aero interface; Windows Vista looks much plainer this way, but doesn't need to trouble the PC's 3D accelerator.

SCREEN SAFER The Presentation Mode allows you to choose a 'colleague-friendly' desktop background

FAR RIGHT With the power plugged in, Mark can crank up the settings and see Vista at its best

RIGHT The power button is rigged to switch the PC to sleep mode; this preserves the battery but restarts in a flash

Network needs

Something else Mark's got a bit of a bee in his bonnet about is internet access. "I visit a lot of other offices, and connect to a load of wireless hotspots when I'm stuck at a train station," he points out. "And it's usually a massive headache to get connected." Fortunately, Windows Vista Ultimate has Mark covered. We wrote about the basics of connecting a PC to a wireless network last month, but there's some more advanced stuff Mark needs to keep in mind due to his shameless connection-hopping.

Every time he hooks up (wired or wireless) to a new network, he needs to tell Windows Vista whether it's a public or a private one. If it's private, he can share files and printers with other computers on the network. If it's public (ie, anywhere that isn't home or work), Windows Vista will do its best to ensure his PC can't be accessed by anyone without his permission. "But what if I need to use the printer at a client's office and I don't want to let some stranger go through all my files?" asks Mark. Time for a trip to yet another Center – Network and Sharing. Though this does crop up in the Home Premium

Meetings to go

Catch up with the team without the inconvenience of actually having to be in the same room

A lot of the colleagues and clients Mark works with aren't quite as technologically aware as he is, but once they've also upgraded to Windows Vista, virtual meetings should be an easier affair.

The Business and Ultimate editions come with an application called Windows Meeting Space. This creates a virtual room that anyone invited to the 'meeting' (either by selecting attendee names from the network or sending email or instant messenger requests) can 'turn up' from the comfort of their own PCs. Mark – or whoever's hosting the meeting – can then choose to share a document, application or even his entire desktop. It'll appear on the screens of everyone attending, so he could go through, say, a Powerpoint presentation without having to physically get everyone in the same place. He can also provide handouts (treated in a similar fashion to email attachments) for everyone to take away, and, if his company's really forward thinking, he can even connect to a network projector so a whole bunch of people in another room can watch the presentation, too. If you're reading this and thinking 'that's good' but you're a senior management type in charge of secrets the rank and file mustn't see at all costs, worry not – the whole thing's password-protected and cannot be accessed without your go-ahead.

VIRTUAL CONFERENCE Travel to the office? Let the meeting come to you

and Business editions too, it's at its most advanced in Ultimate and will put mark's mind at ease about randoms people accessing his files.

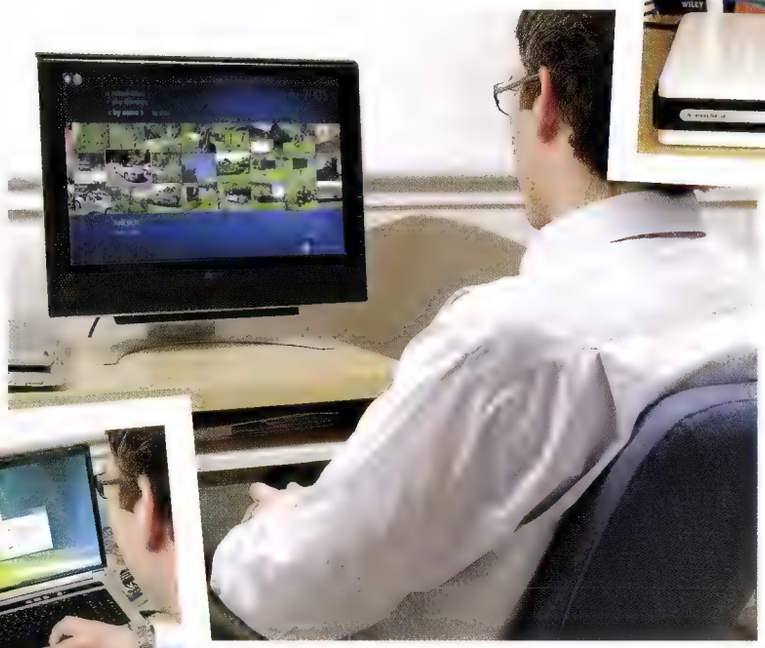
After loading up the Network and Sharing Center from the Start menu, what we're trying to locate is the bunch of options underneath Sharing and Discovery. Here, Mark can choose what he wants to allow on whatever network he's connected to. Options for whether or not his PC's visible to other systems on the network, whether it can share printers and/or and if shared files have passwords or not can be set individually – he just needs to click on whichever setting is required, then choose Turn on/Turn Off.

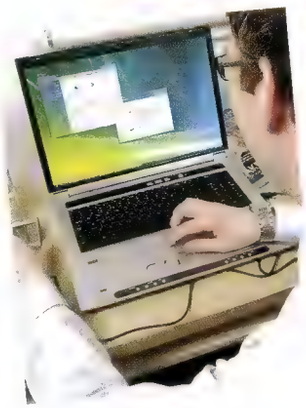
The Network and Sharing Center also allows Mark to take a gander at other computers and shared folders on the network. Clicking on **View full map** shows every visible PC and device on the network, making it easy to see what is connected to the network. A further click on any one reveals anything it has shared – a handy feature if sharing documents with a colleague.

Windows Vista Ultimate's networking and internet options get a lot more advanced than that, but it is an easy task to get up and running using multiple networks safely. For now we'll leave Mark to delve into the more complex options when he's ready. Even if we tried to explain them to him, he seems more caught up in the multimedia capabilities of Windows Vista Ultimate. All Mark seems interested in doing is using Windows Media Player to copy music to his phone. Nothing we say seems to be able to grab his attention.

Time for action. We decide to demonstrate another neat trick of all Windows Vista editions without his cooperation. We reach over and hit the power button on his laptop. "Oi!" he shouts. The screen turns black, the fans turn off and the lights go out. Silence. Then we hit the power button again, and in just a few seconds everything's back as it was, music *et al*. For a reluctant 'rail warrior' like Mark, Windows Vista's Sleep mode saves a lot of time if he's got to close the laptop lid and dart between stations.

SHARE WARE The Network and Sharing Center makes short work of setting up the wireless network





MEDIA MOMENT Windows Vista Ultimate comes with Windows Media Center, so when Mark wants a break from work, he can connect his laptop to his second monitor and enjoy his media on the bigger screen

Mark's verdict

Easier networking "It never made sense before, but seems really obvious now. I reckon I can network-hop without too much hassle."

Phone syncing "There aren't many times when I don't have my laptop with me, but it's easy to get all my messages onto my phone for when that does happen."

Better mobile control "I'm not going to miss mucking around in Control Panel to make my laptop talk to an external monitor."

More professional presentations "It's good to know my sales meetings aren't going to be interrupted by the screensaver just when I'm at the important bit."

Work and play "Stuff like Windows Media Center makes the laptop feel like a lot more than just a work machine."

Choose your version

Work out which edition of Windows Vista suits your particular needs

	HOME BASIC	HOME PREMIUM	BUSINESS	ULTIMATE
AERO INTERFACE	NO	YES	YES	YES
WINDOWS MOBILITY CENTER	PARTIAL	PARTIAL	COMPLETE	COMPLETE
PRESENTATION MODE	NO	YES	YES	YES
WINDOWS MEDIA CENTER, DVD MAKER AND MOVIE MAKER HD	NO	YES	YES	YES
BITLOCKER DRIVE ENCRYPTION	NO	NO	NO	YES
ADVANCED NETWORKING	NO	NO	NO	YES
PURPOSE	Everyday PC use	Entertainment & productivity	Small and medium corporate use	The fully whammy, for both work and entertainment
PRICE *(UPGRADE/FULL)*	$199/$385	$299/$455	$379/$565	$495/$750

Productivity in numbers

Incredible statistics about how we use computers in our everyday lives

Start Search

Start Search is the 2nd favourite feature in Windows Vista

Workers spend at least **an hour** a day using their computer for personal reasons, and it's the younger, more computer-literate generation that are most likely to report them for doing so

3 MILLION BLOGS

are created every month, most of which are at lunchtime!

The most common spelling mistake in word processing is your for 'you are'

389m

internet users in Asia; the highest number in the world

24 DAYS

The amount of time every year the average person wastes on computer problems

On average, men spend around 180 days per year using a computer...

...while women only spend about 90 days a year at the PC

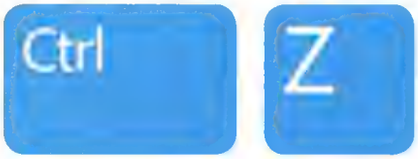
1,024x768

The resolution of 54 per cent of monitors

20,000

The number of pages of paper the average person uses in a year

The most used shortcut in Windows Vista is



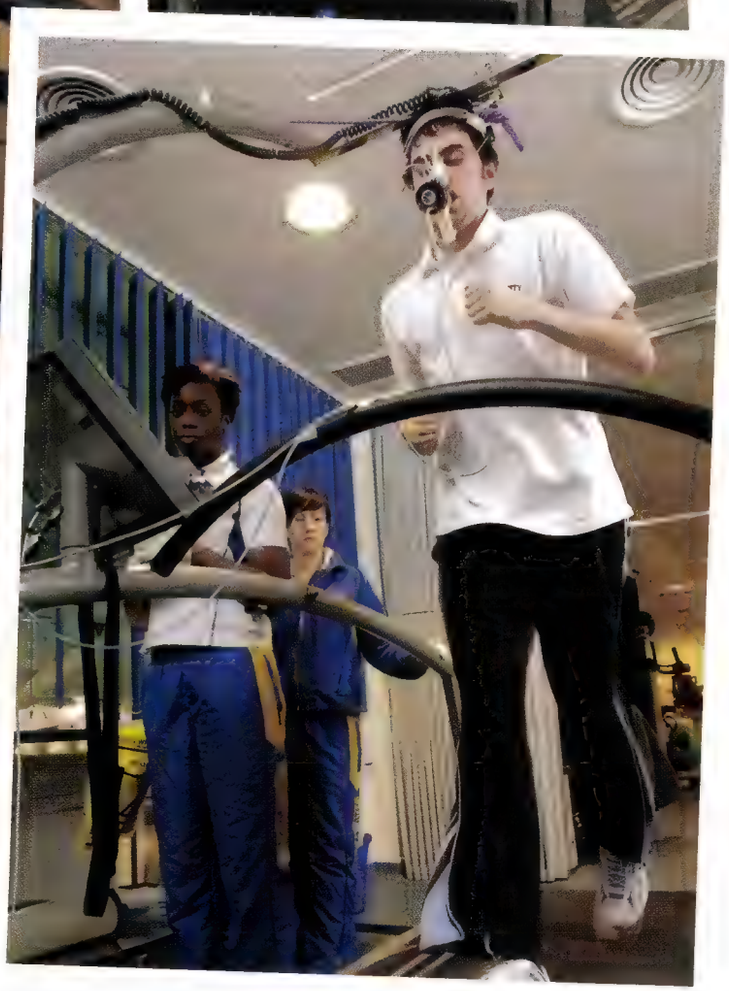
the undo function. Pity it doesn't work in real life

Computer games can help you lose up to

12kg

of weight a year

STARTING OUT James gets down to some serious exercise as his breathing and blood oxygen levels are measured



EXPERT ADVICE Jenny Otoo and Annie Lea monitor James' performance as the difficulty is stepped up

COMPUTER FITNESS The state-of-the-art sports injury laboratory gives James a real workout to determine his fitness levels.

Get fit using your PC

Getting fit used to be about blood, sweat and tears, but now your computer enables you to get in shape without any crying or bleeding. **By James Stables**

FIT FOR PURPOSE? The need for exercise is apparent after Stables' poor performance in the fitness test

My feet would barely lift off the ground, my legs ached and my heart felt as though it was about to burst out of my rib cage. That was the last time I took up running in a bid to get fit. As you can imagine, my new regime didn't last long.

If, like me, you feel guilty about the amount of exercise you don't do but lack the motivation to do anything about it, there's good news. A mass of new technologies can make battling the bulge more enjoyable, and get even the most inactive of us off the sofa.

To prove this, my mission was to use the PC as a training aid to get fit in six weeks. I was scientifically assessed before and after the six-week period with the aim that, by sticking to my training schedule, the second round of tests would show some improvement in my overall health.

I chose three products that link with the PC to help me change my slothful ways. The first was the humble dance mat, already a champion with eight-year-olds everywhere, but anyone who has used one knows it to be a demanding activity. The second was a new product called the PCGamerBike, which is a USB exercise bike that doubles as a games controller. The third was the Nike+ iPod, which links your trainers to your iPod nano and maps your runs online.

My personal training plan was as follows: running using the Nike+ iPod on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays; 45-minute dance mat and pedal game sessions on Tuesdays and Thursdays; rest and recovery at weekends.

Help and efficiency

If I was going to complete this mission, I would need some serious help. I met up with Gavin Reynoldson, a fitness and personal training tutor, who specialises in health and fitness for athletes.

Gavin agreed to assess my health before and after my computer-aided fitness regime, so I could see if my new lifestyle was having any benefit. He also checked over the merits of my equipment. "The dance mat will improve the efficiency of your heart and lungs, and will make your heart stronger and deliver more oxygen to the tissue. Users should also see improved flexibility in their muscles," he said.

Next was the Nike+ iPod and special running shoes. Gavin seemed impressed: "Running provides great aerobic exercise, and this kind of high impact training will help prevent osteoporosis, which affects the bones."

In order to test how effective this electronic exercise regime could be, it was essential to check my overall fitness, so I was checked over for blood pressure, body weight, standing heart rate, body fat and blood oxygen levels before and after the six-week exercise period. Most of these tests are quite easy to perform at home. You can buy blood

TESTING Jenny prepares to take a blood sample from James to see how effectively the oxygen is transferred

SCAN ME UP James lays out on the scanner so that the team can measure his body fat levels, the results of which can be seen below...

pressure monitors relatively cheaply on the main street, and some pharmacies even check it for free in store. My blood pressure was 130/81, which is a little high. 120/80 is normal and anything over 140 means that you need to become more active or run the risk of heart-related illness.

To test your resting heart rate it's important to be sitting comfortably for about five minutes to make sure the test is as accurate as possible. Locate the artery on the thumb side, underneath your wrist, and count the beats for exactly one minute. Gavin took three readings of my pulse, which averaged 70. Any reading between 60 to 80 beats is normal; anything over this may indicate a medical problem or a need to embark on a tentative exercise regime, so if yours is high, consult your doctor.

Next I was subjected to a VO2 test, which can only be done in a professional sports lab. This involved a body scan to determine the fat in my body and a run on a treadmill to assess my body's ability to deliver oxygen to my blood, a crucial indicator of fitness. The result showed my body was 25 percent fat and my oxygen uptake was 38.8ml/kg/min, which is well below average for someone of my age. My aim was a reduction of body fat and an increase in oxygen uptake.

Running battle

Primed and ready for action, I headed out on my first run with the Nike+ shoes and iPod.

Music to work out to

Whether you're using an MP3 player out on a run, or exercising with your PC using Windows Media Player, here are four artists to help you work up a sweat

LCD Soundsystem *45:33*

As the title suggests, this is a 45-minute mix by one of the most respected producers around at the moment. The ups and downs of the beats are designed to keep you motivated, with a peak around 25 minutes to give you an extra boost.

The Crystal Method *Drive*

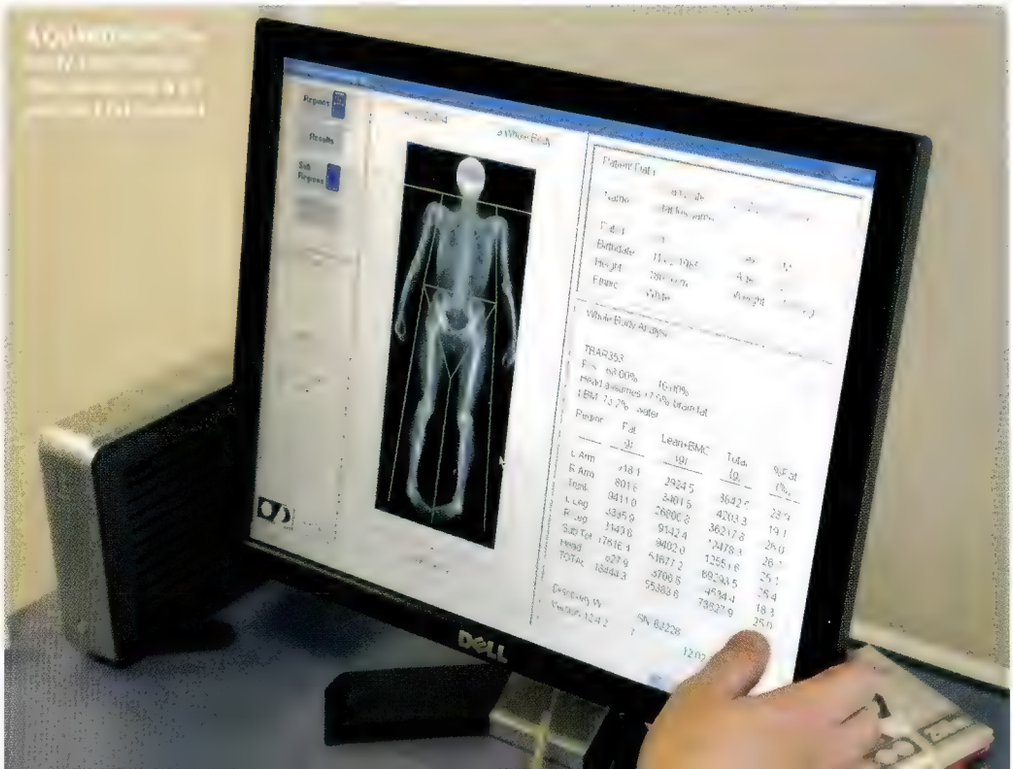
The first 45-minute mix made specifically for running, this tune is designed to transfer the energy of the dance floor into your exercise.

Rage Against the Machine *Self-titled*

If steady beats aren't your cup of isotonic liquid, the renegades of funk provide a perfect soundtrack to your training. Angry lyrics, blistering guitars and anti-establishment rants are guaranteed to get you pumped.

Queen *Greatest Hits*

With songs such as *We are the Champions*, *Another One Bites the Dust*, and *Bicycle Race*, Queen are the undisputed kings of music to do sport to.



CLAMP DOWN This tamper-proof device is actually measuring the amount of oxygen and carbon dioxide in exhaling during my test

RHYTHM & TUNES When linked to the Nike+ system your iPod can play music and record your stats

Desk stretches

Before any exercise it's important to warm up so you steer clear of any nasty injuries. Here are five stretches you can do at your computer desk

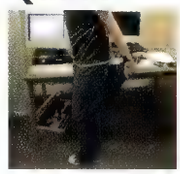
Calf stretch

Put one foot in front of the other and keep both facing forwards. Put your hands on the desk and lean forward, bending your front knee so you feel tension in your straightened back leg. Reverse and repeat.

Hamstring stretch

A pulled hamstring can be very painful but you can use your desk to help prevent it. Stand up and put one foot up on the desk, so it's perpendicular to your body. Point your toes back towards you and try to touch them, holding the tension for 10 seconds before you repeat.

Quads



Hold on to the corner of the desk and pull your feet back to touch your buttocks, keeping your knees together. Hold the stretch, swap and then repeat.

Groin

Sit up straight in your chair, and bring your feet together between your legs by tucking your knees up to your chest. Push your knees apart, hold the stretch for 10 seconds, relax and repeat.

Elbow press

Sit up straight and pull your arm up and back over your shoulder, stretching it down between your shoulder blades. Put your hand on the point of your elbow and hold it here for 10 seconds, then repeat with your other arm.

> "The iPod enables you to select a power song for moments of weakness, which helps drive you on for that extra mile"

I set it for a 20-minute workout, which Gavin recommended as an introduction, and started running at a gentle pace. However, I'd already had to stop to catch my breath when the merciless woman who encourages you from your iPod informed me that I had been running for five minutes – it felt like days.

However, Nike+ does make the experience less painful. I had chosen my playlist, and the iPod enables you to select a power song for moments of weakness, which drives you on for that extra click. I hadn't yet travelled one kilometre, and I'm not sure the power song is designed to be used so early in the workout, but I needed it.

Back at home, plugging the iPod into my PC made the device come alive. It displayed the distance travelled, calories burned and a graph of my journey, showing every downturn in my performance like the crash of a stock market.

Having a visual representation of my efforts made the aftermath seem a lot less painful, and it really does drive you to get out there and do it again. On my repeated outings to pound the pavements, I could see real improvement – and after four runs the voices of Paula Radcliffe and Lance Armstrong congratulated me on my progress. I felt proud of my efforts.

While the Nike+ assisted running was a high effort activity, taking plenty of motivation to get out into the cold night air, the dance mat was one that could be done with relative ease. And it really is fun to use. Yes, it makes you look dafter than Molly Meldrum in *Dancing with the Stars*, but it is really addictive, and quite tiring.

Aerobically it's OK; not a patch on the running but a 20-minute session left me sweating and tired, and I can really see what Gavin meant about it helping your muscles.

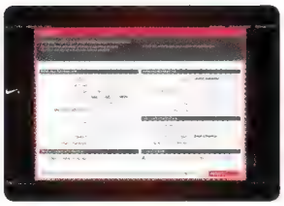
The e-Best USB-PC Dance Mat is a pretty basic piece of equipment. Don't expect voice commands from Lance Armstrong or Paula Radcliffe this time, you don't even get a calorie counter. What you can expect though is a decent work out that will give you some variety in your exercise routine. Very important if you want to keep the motivation levels high.

On yer bike

The PCGamerBike is a novel idea, guaranteed to

How to set up Nike+

Put your best foot forward with this nifty device



1 CREATE ACCOUNT
Sign up to Nike+ on the website at www.nikeplus.com.au and create an account. Your run details will be updated to your profile which you can then view when you plug the iPod nano into your computer.

2 SET SOME GOALS
Have an idea of what you want to achieve and use Nike+ to set some realistic goals. Aim to do a certain amount of runs per week or, if you want to get really fit, set yourself a number of miles for the week.

3 JOIN THE COMMUNITY
Nike+ is community based, and you can join in with forums and chat to other runners. Pair up with someone of the same ability and set each other challenges. You'll be fighting fit in no time.

4 ADD YOUR RUNS
When you plug in your iPod nano your data will be automatically updated on the Nike+ website. It plots a line graph of your run showing your pace, distance and, harshly, even when you stop!

5 TRACK YOUR PROGRESS
All your runs are listed together, and can be viewed by week or month. The chart shows how far you have run each time and the improvement in your fitness levels.

have your mates crowded around you, begging for a go. You can use it to play any game that usually uses the keyboard, by assigning forwards and backwards to specific keys. However, the degree of success you achieve depends on the style of the game you're playing.

The best games are racing ones, such as Need for Speed, where one key command dominates your movement. You can then use the keyboard, which is quite awkward, or a joypad to control lateral movement. Interesting adaptations have been Counter-Strike and Half-Life 2, which are excellent, if a little tricky.

The bike enables you to change the resistance and therefore vary your exercise and, like the dance mat, does leave you pretty exhausted. An onboard computer also records the distance pedalled, time spent and calories burned – and all while playing your favourite PC games.

Just one week into my mission and I'm feeling the benefits. I feel more relaxed and energetic at work, and you can't go past the natural high you get after a serious workout, or even 20 minutes spent pedalling around on the PCGamerBike. But what will the statistics say? Is it really possible to have fun and work out at the same time? Do I manage to fight the fat and improve my health? Find out in issue five. In the meantime, I challenge you to join me...

> "An onboard computer records calories burned – all while playing your favourite games"

Keep fit kit

Everything you need to keep yourself in peak physical condition

Nike+ iPod

Nike has joined forces with Apple to revolutionise the way we run. The sensor is placed into the shoe and links automatically to your iPod nano, recording your time, distance and calories burned.
Price $48 for the kit (requires Nike+ shoes and iPod nano)
Web www.nike.com.au

Polar Heart Rate Monitors

The wrist watch for the fitness junkie. It monitors your heart rate constantly, giving you all kinds of data. Some models link with a training program that enables you to plan your exercise, plot charts and monitor your body in minute detail.
Price $249 (Polar F6)
Web www.pursuit-performance.com.au

PCGamerBike

You don't need a cycling or motorbike game to use this brilliant device. It replaces any designated button on your keyboard, allowing it to be the input device for almost any game. Whether it is Need for Speed Carbon, STALKER: Shadow of Chernobyl, or World of Warcraft, exercise will be a whole lot more fun from now on.
Price US$179 ($222)
Web www.gamecycles.com

e-Best PC-USB Dance Mat

Not only Christmas Day fun and stupidity for all the family, the humble dance mat is also a mean exercise machine. Sustained use really makes you work up a sweat and is good for muscle flexibility.
Price $30
Web www.gameswarehouse.com.au

Your music your way

Find, share and enjoy new music – on your PC, stereo or portable audio player

Plus!

- The best budget Vista desktops
- Create your own online radio station
- How to set up an affordable home office

Free!

SOFTWARE DVD & 100-PAGE GUIDE TO WINDOWS VISTA

Issue four on sale Wednesday 23 May

AM/FM RADIO

It's difficult to relax listening to a radio like this. Firstly, the tinny screeching of the tiny speaker is hardly lullaby-ready and, secondly, if you do manage to drift off to sleep, you'll only be woken by whichever insurance company's jingle is the most obnoxious. As with last issue's old television, get rid of it before it hurts somebody.

In part two of our digital home series, we invite you to spend a night

The digital bedroom

of ambient intelligence in the digital bedroom... By James De Vile

We spend a third of our lives sleeping. Not only is it necessary, research also suggests that it builds a strong immune system, aids memory retention and restores brain proteins. A study published in 2005 by Taiwanese Professor Hui-Ling Lai also suggests that listening to relaxing music for 45 minutes before bedtime can improve sleep patterns and act as a natural sedative, curing insomnia and relieving pain and stress. Add to your usual six to eight hours of sleep some time either side for snoozing, dozing, reading and anything else you may wish to do within the privacy of your own bedroom, and it becomes clear that it's one of the most important rooms you'll ever spend time in.

However, while some people may have entertained the notion of transforming the bedroom into an all-singing, all-dancing media centre, complete with widescreen wall-mounted flat panel, surround sound and video streaming, we urge you to think minimal. If you saw our first instalment of this digital home series in the previous issue, you'll already have a cinema-class system in your lounge, so there's no reason to try to create a secondary entertainment centre in your bedroom. A bedroom needs to be treated as a haven of calm, for all the reasons we've mentioned. You're simply not going to relax and fall into a deep sleep if you're still awake in the small hours watching *Saw III* – especially if you're the one actually trying to go to sleep, and it's your significant other who is watching said gore-fest.

For this reason, we've designed this digital bedroom to be television-free, yet still contain an array of ambient intelligence devices. 'Ambient intelligence', or AmI, is a vision in which humans are surrounded by electronic devices and networking technology, unobtrusively embedded into their surroundings. In the case of our bedroom, a few well placed AmI devices will help make your sleeping and waking hours more enjoyable without fillng the room with cables –

PREDICT THE WEATHER OUTSIDE WHILE YOU DO YOUR HAIR

Product Oregon MR238 Mirror Weather Station
Price $289 (from www.pht.com.au)
Web www.oregonscientific.com.au
Tap the button on the top of this mirror to activate the vacuum fluorescent display (VFD) under the glass layer, providing detailed information about the weather via a wireless sensor placed outside. It'll also predict the weather for the rest of the day.

LISTEN TO YOUR TUNES IN WIRELESS PRIVACY

Product Sennheiser RS110 Wireless Headphones
Price $169 (from www.headphones.com.au) **Web** www.syntec.com.au
Clamp these cans over your ears and the rest of the world will fade into blissful insignificance; they are light and wireless – so you won't get tied up in cables – and remain comfortable, even after long periods of listening. Sound reproduction is top-notch and the bass is punchy.

ENJOY SPECTACULAR SOUND QUALITY

Product Acoustic Energy Aego M 2.1 speaker system
Price US$200 (from www.amazon.com)
Web www.acoustic-energy.co.uk
This micro-system comprises of two tiny, yet surprisingly heavy, satellite speakers and subwoofer. The sub tucks neatly under the bed, and the two satellites look great next to the Squeezebox, creating crisp sound.

STREAM YOUR MUSIC WIRELESSLY TO YOUR BEDROOM

Product Slim Devices Squeezebox 3
Price $489 (www.streetwise.com.au)
Web www.vistra.com.au
Install the server software on your office PC and the Squeezebox will connect to it wirelessly from anywhere in your house via your Wi-Fi network. It's tiny and unobtrusive, easily seen from anywhere in the room and the screen can be dimmed down low.

and, of course, these facilities will all integrate with Windows Vista.

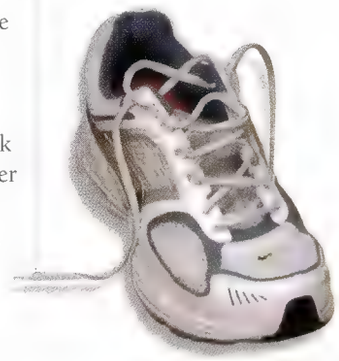
Our bedroom can be recreated with current products for relatively small amounts of money. However, the future of ambient intelligence is already written; Philips' research division has been studying ambient intelligence for a few years now, and has transformed an entire house, called HomeLab, in order to explore its possibilities. "What's noticeably missing from Philips' HomeLab is lots of bulky electronic equipment," explains Boris de Ruyter, Principle Scientist at Philips Research in the Netherlands. "In the home of the future, electronics will be seamlessly integrated with wireless connections and voice or gesture recognition, so that you'll hardly notice its presence. In the not-so-distant-future you really won't have to move a muscle or even press a button to hear the music you want to play!"

Turn on, turn in

Your time in our digital bedroom starts with some late-night listening courtesy of our bedside Squeezebox, streaming wirelessly from our Windows Vista PC. Choose anything from our extensive Windows Media Player music library – though we'd recommend some slow jazz, or perhaps the lyrical sonority of Debussy – to send you off. If you're alone, try out the Aego M speaker system – it's by far the best-sounding micro set-up we've ever heard. If you've got company, you may wish to slip on a pair of Sennheiser RS110s; they're wireless, and won't disturb your partner. You can also configure the Squeezebox to play for a certain amount of time before shutting down for the night.

Before you fall asleep, take a look at our digital picture frame; another example of Aml, it enables you to put your favourite photos on loop, and as the screen is illuminated, it'll also act as a modern day lava-lamp, bathing the room in colour.

Before you know it, after a refreshing eight hours' sleep, you'll be woken to Bob Marley proclaiming: "Wake up y'all, wake up and live!" courtesy of Gear4's House Party 24/7 iPod alarm clock.



AFTER

LET YOUR PHOTOS ENTERTAIN

Product Philips 9in 9FF2M4 Digital Photo Frame
Price $450 (from www.binglee.com.au) **Web** www.philips.com.au
Complete with a choice of coloured borders, this latest Philips frame enables you to copy photos from Windows Photo Gallery and view them in the comfort of your bedroom. The frame provides interesting visual stimuli, yet isn't as intrusive as a high-def plasma screen.

WAKE UP TO YOUR FAVOURITE PLAYLIST

Product Gear4 HouseParty 24/7
Price $210 (from www.centre.com.au)
Web www.gear4.com
There are various iPod alarm clocks available, but in terms of sound quality and general design this is as good as it gets. The little black box packs a subwoofer and stereo speakers, an FM radio and, of course, charges your iPod ready for the next morning.

TRACK YOUR FITNESS PROGRESS THROUGH YOUR IPOD

Product Nike + iPod/Nike Air Zoom Moire+
Price From $180 (from www.footlocker.com.au)
Web www.apple.com/au/ipod/nike
These are Nike training shoes with a difference; one shoe contains a motion sensor, wirelessly sending data to your iPod nano ready for viewing when you get home. It'll track your speed, distance and show you how many calories you've burnt, and enable you to compare your results over time.

"With the Sennheiser RS110 the world will fade into blissful insignificance."

We've found that tracks that start quietly and grow louder are great for waking up to; it's a far cry from the traditional jarring beep of your old alarm.

Before you go, take a look in the mirror; we can't guarantee you'll appreciate the reflection at this point in the morning, but this being an Oregon Scientific Weather Station displaying all manner of current and predicted forecast information, at least you'll know what to wear for your morning jog. James Stables can recommend the appropriate footwear; turn to page 42 to see how he got on with the Nike + iPod training pack, which incorporates a tiny sensor in your trainers to track your exercise results. Thanks to your HouseParty 24/7, your nano will already be charged as well.

If there's severe weather outside, perhaps you would prefer just chilling out to the sounds of your Squeezebox and Acoustic Energy Aego M 2.1 speakers.

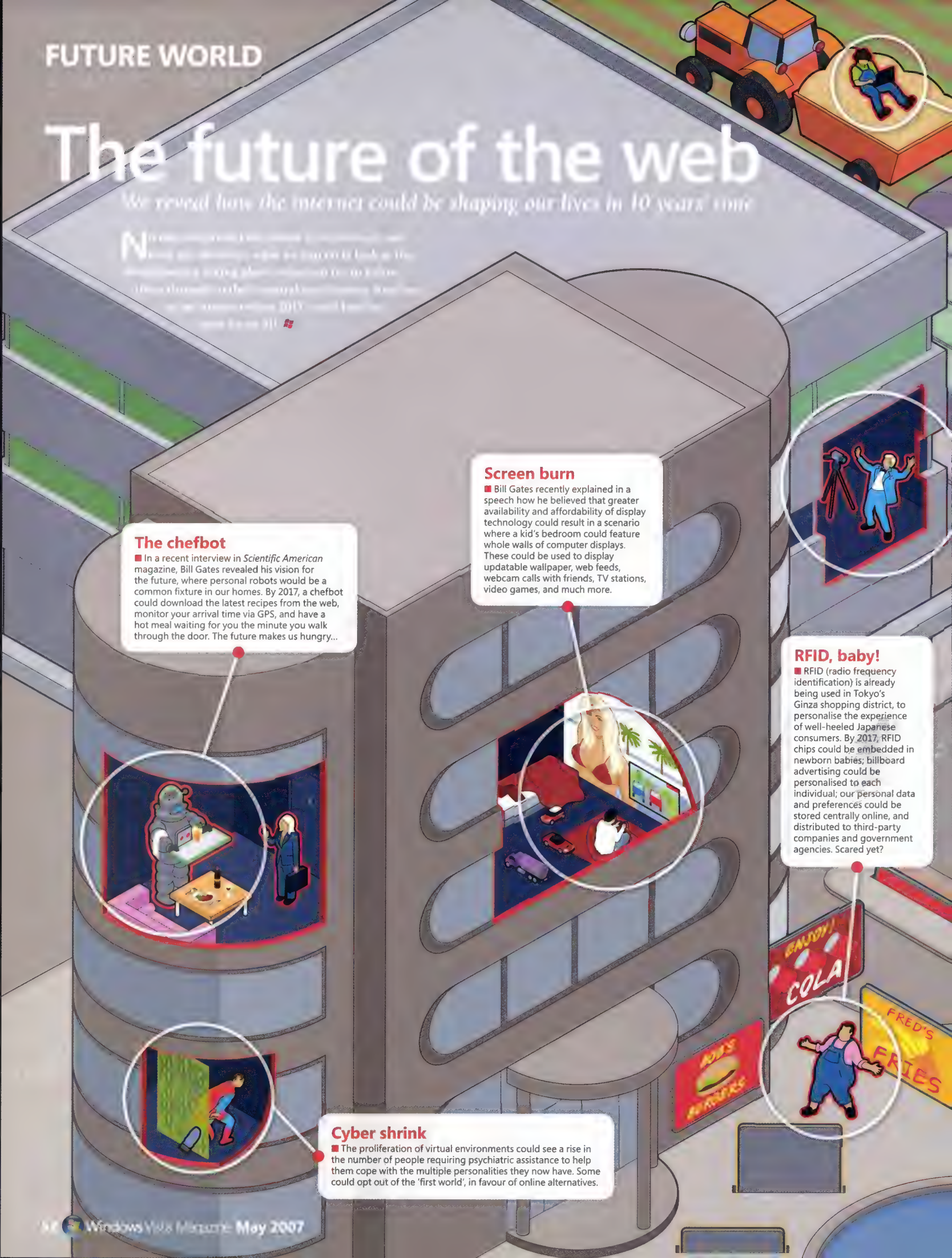
NEXT MONTH The digital office

Win a Gear4 HouseParty 24/7 iPod Alarm Clock

Still being shocked awake by the piercing beep of a standard alarm clock? Then you need this! This speaker dock looks good, sounds fantastic – and waking up to your favourite track is a great way to start the day. It also recharges your iPod! Just tell us in 25 words or less how waking up to the Gear4 HouseParty 24/7 could change your day. Send your entry to competitions@vistamag.com.au.

The future of the web

We reveal how the internet could be shaping our lives in 10 years' time



The chefbot

■ In a recent interview in *Scientific American* magazine, Bill Gates revealed his vision for the future, where personal robots would be a common fixture in our homes. By 2017, a chefbot could download the latest recipes from the web, monitor your arrival time via GPS, and have a hot meal waiting for you the minute you walk through the door. The future makes us hungry...

Screen burn

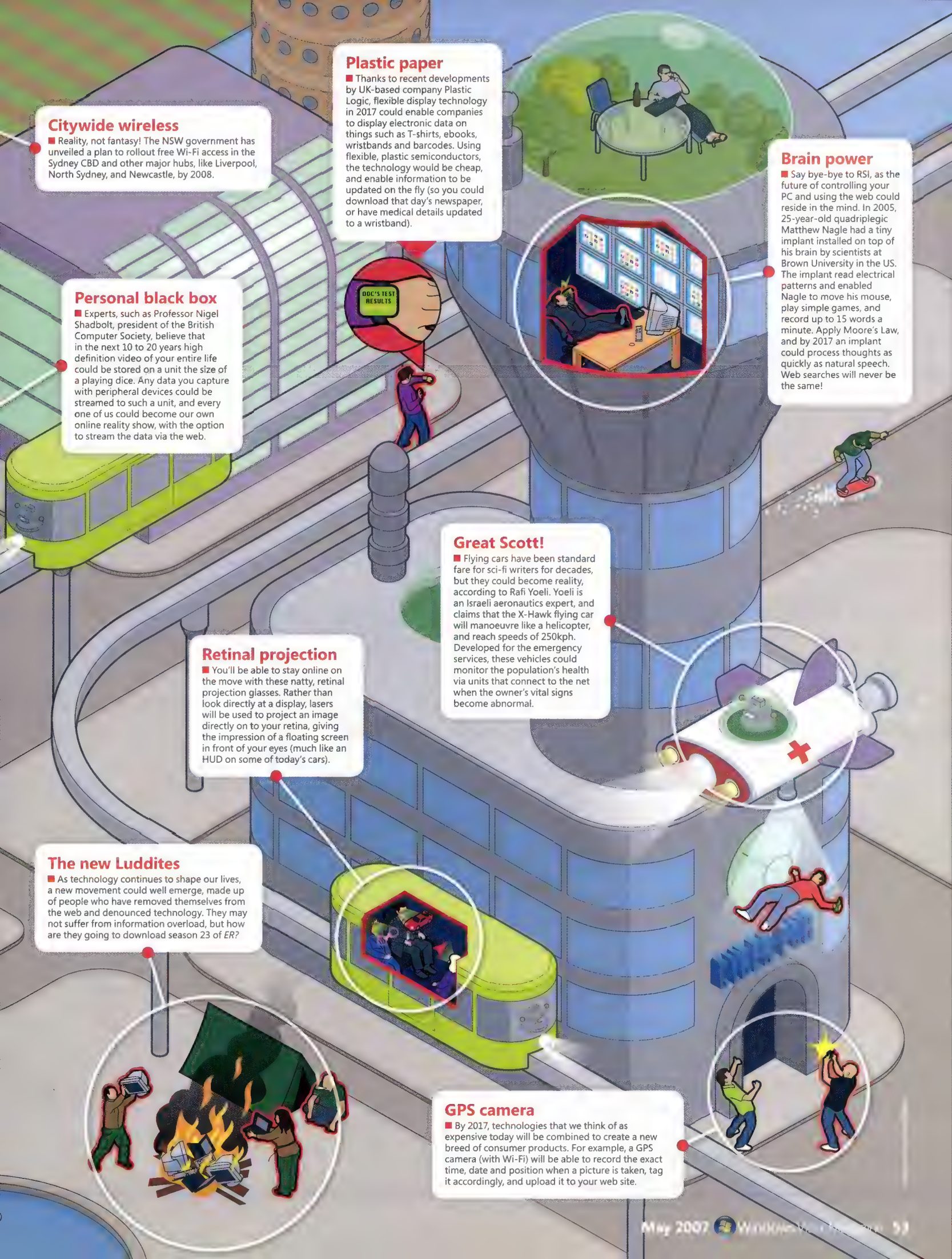
■ Bill Gates recently explained in a speech how he believed that greater availability and affordability of display technology could result in a scenario where a kid's bedroom could feature whole walls of computer displays. These could be used to display updatable wallpaper, web feeds, webcam calls with friends, TV stations, video games, and much more.

RFID, baby!

■ RFID (radio frequency identification) is already being used in Tokyo's Ginza shopping district, to personalise the experience of well-heeled Japanese consumers. By 2017, RFID chips could be embedded in newborn babies; billboard advertising could be personalised to each individual; our personal data and preferences could be stored centrally online, and distributed to third-party companies and government agencies. Scared yet?

Cyber shrink

■ The proliferation of virtual environments could see a rise in the number of people requiring psychiatric assistance to help them cope with the multiple personalities they now have. Some could opt out of the 'first world', in favour of online alternatives.



Citywide wireless

■ Reality, not fantasy! The NSW government has unveiled a plan to rollout free Wi-Fi access in the Sydney CBD and other major hubs, like Liverpool, North Sydney, and Newcastle, by 2008.

Plastic paper

■ Thanks to recent developments by UK-based company Plastic Logic, flexible display technology in 2017 could enable companies to display electronic data on things such as T-shirts, ebooks, wristbands and barcodes. Using flexible, plastic semiconductors, the technology would be cheap, and enable information to be updated on the fly (so you could download that day's newspaper, or have medical details updated to a wristband).

Brain power

■ Say bye-bye to RSI, as the future of controlling your PC and using the web could reside in the mind. In 2005, 25-year-old quadriplegic Matthew Nagle had a tiny implant installed on top of his brain by scientists at Brown University in the US. The implant read electrical patterns and enabled Nagle to move his mouse, play simple games, and record up to 15 words a minute. Apply Moore's Law, and by 2017 an implant could process thoughts as quickly as natural speech. Web searches will never be the same!

Personal black box

■ Experts, such as Professor Nigel Shadbolt, president of the British Computer Society, believe that in the next 10 to 20 years high definition video of your entire life could be stored on a unit the size of a playing dice. Any data you capture with peripheral devices could be streamed to such a unit, and every one of us could become our own online reality show, with the option to stream the data via the web.

Great Scott!

■ Flying cars have been standard fare for sci-fi writers for decades, but they could become reality, according to Rafi Yoeli. Yoeli is an Israeli aeronautics expert, and claims that the X-Hawk flying car will manoeuvre like a helicopter, and reach speeds of 250kph. Developed for the emergency services, these vehicles could monitor the population's health via units that connect to the net when the owner's vital signs become abnormal.

Retinal projection

■ You'll be able to stay online on the move with these natty, retinal projection glasses. Rather than look directly at a display, lasers will be used to project an image directly on to your retina, giving the impression of a floating screen in front of your eyes (much like an HUD on some of today's cars).

The new Luddites

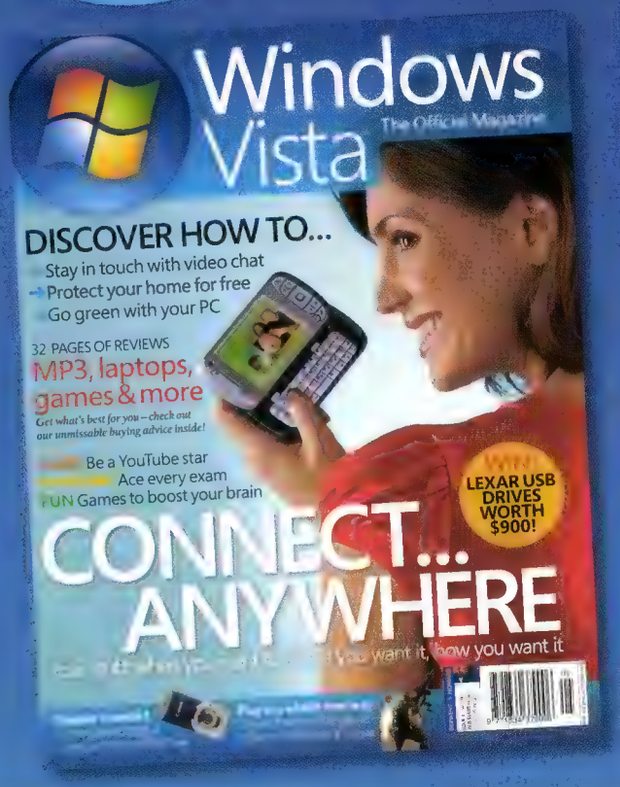
■ As technology continues to shape our lives, a new movement could well emerge, made up of people who have removed themselves from the web and denounced technology. They may not suffer from information overload, but how are they going to download season 23 of *ER*?

GPS camera

■ By 2017, technologies that we think of as expensive today will be combined to create a new breed of consumer products. For example, a GPS camera (with Wi-Fi) will be able to record the exact time, date and position when a picture is taken, tag it accordingly, and upload it to your web site.

Windows Vista

The Official Magazine



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A Lexar JumpDrive Lightning worth $180!

One of the best new features in Vista is ReadyBoost, which allows you to use a USB flash drive to increase your PCs memory. Not all USB drives are ReadyBoost-certified, but Lexar's **JumpDrive Lightning** is – allowing you to give your PC up to 4GB of extra RAM in an instant. With Lexar's PowerToGo software pre-installed as well, the JumpDrive Lightning also allows you to turn any computer into your own PC – enabling you to carry your programs, settings and favourites in your pocket, along with your files. We've got five JumpDrive Lightning 4GB models to give away this month, each worth $180. All you need to do to be in with a chance of winning is to subscribe to Windows Vista Magazine this month and tell us, in 25 words or less, **why your PC needs to be struck by Lightning!**

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GET STARTED

This is the real one-step-at-a-time section of the magazine, and we make no apologies for it. Almost all of us are new to Windows Vista, and Get Started is the place where we pay particular attention to the wise adage that it makes no sense trying to run before you've learned how to walk...

THIS ISSUE

INSTALLATION
Your questions answered.....56

ERROR REPORTING
Find and fix PC problems.....58

REMOTE DESKTOP
Go on the road.....60

SOLUTIONS

Your installation problems solved

Do you have a problem with Windows Vista? Before going into panic mode, check the solutions below to see if it's already been covered – and fixed. By Nick Peers

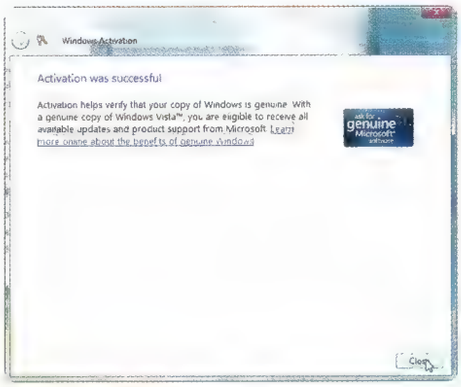
Fix problems when activating Windows

Alan Frost had to reinstall Windows Vista after his attempt to install drivers from Canon resulted in his machine locking up. Alan's problem with the Canon drivers was probably linked to drivers left over from his previous version of Windows conflicting with the new software. When you come to install new USB devices like scanners, don't plug them in until you've installed the software or drivers first.

Alan had another hangover from his forced reinstallation: he keeps getting messages to activate Windows, which then tell him the product is already activated. Get around this by clicking **Next** instead of **Activate online now** when the message appears.

Other activation problems can be dealt with by referring to the Microsoft Knowledge Base at support.microsoft.com/kb/931276 – failed activations generate an error code, and a number of resolutions are described here.

If this doesn't help, download the WGA Diagnostics Tool from go.microsoft.com/fwlink/?linkid=52012 – this generates a report about your system, which you should post to forums.microsoft.com/genuine along with details of your activation-related issue for further advice and, hopefully, a solution.



SYSTEM KICKSTART Discover what to do when Windows Vista refuses to activate

Solving the Mapfile1 error message

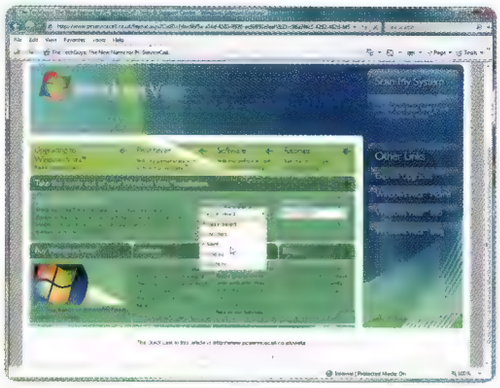
John Smith's problem stemmed from a "mapfile1: access is denied" message each time he started Internet Explorer or Windows Mail. Mapfile1 is linked to software for ATI graphics cards, and the error is found on PCs that have been upgraded to Windows Vista from an earlier version of Windows.

The best solution is to locate new drivers and software from your graphics card manufacturer. Make sure it's compatible with Windows Vista. If none is

available, download the latest drivers from ati.amd.com/support/driver.html instead, uninstall your existing graphics card software from the **Add or Remove Programs** control panel and then install this in its place.

Get device drivers for older hardware

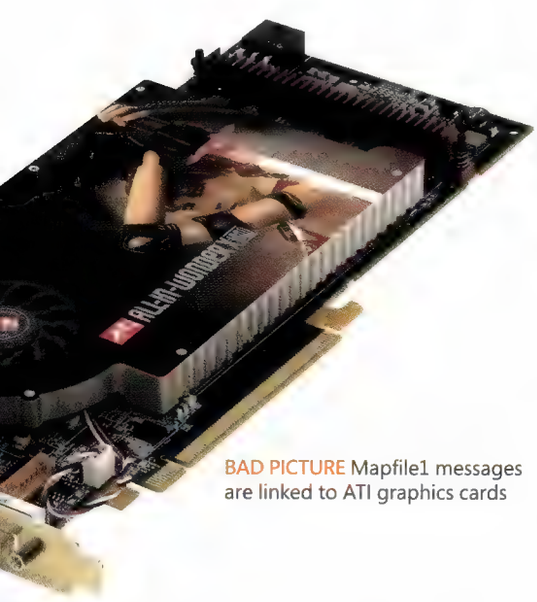
Ronnie Lowe's plea is typical of many we've received: can we get his wireless adapter working? Sadly, not all devices are compatible



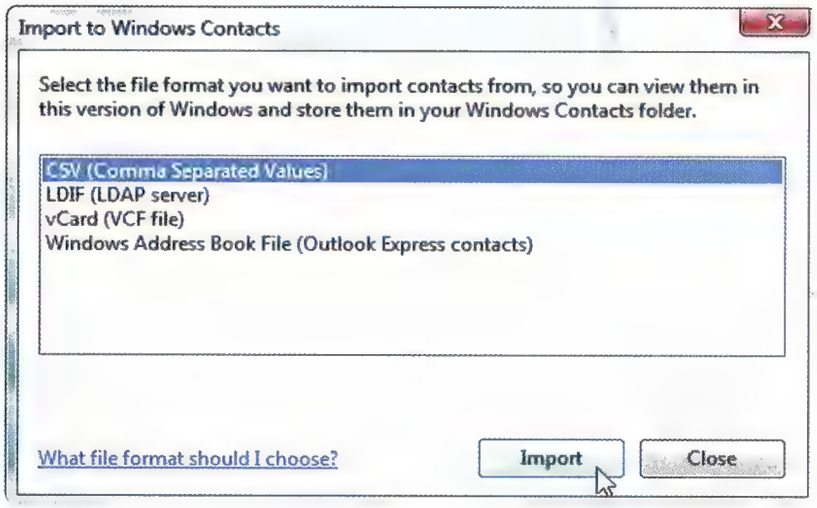
DRIVING AMBITION Check with your PC or hardware manufacturer's web site for compatible drivers

with Windows Vista – manufacturers may never produce Windows Vista ready drivers, while Windows XP drivers may not necessarily work (the Windows Vista Upgrade Advisor tool should provide essential advice here).

The best thing to do is check to see whether Windows Vista drivers have been developed – if the component is part of your computer, check your PC manufacturer's web site first for a driver update. If you purchased the hardware separately from the rest of your PC, you should visit its manufacturer's web site for Windows Vista compatible drivers and support.



BAD PICTURE Mapfile1 messages are linked to ATI graphics cards



KEEP IN CONTACT Export your Microsoft Outlook contacts for use within Windows Mail

Use old Microsoft Outlook contacts in Windows Mail

We heard from Tony Waters about the possibility of importing his Microsoft Outlook contacts list into Windows Mail – it is possible, Tony, but you must first open your contacts in Outlook itself, then export them to a file using **File ➜ Import and Export**. Choose to export a file before selecting **Comma Separated File (DOS)**. You can then import this into Windows Mail using **File ➜ Import ➜ Windows Contacts**. Select **CSV (Command Separated Values)** and locate the file you exported.

Unblocking start-up program alerts

James Farmer suddenly found himself on the wrong end of a blocked start-up program alert, referring to Update Util Application, which flashes each time he starts his PC and while he's using it during the day.

From the sounds of the program name, it's a program update utility, which should only need to run once to either check for and install updates, or complete a previous update. To fix the problem click the Blocked startup programs icon in the Notification area of the Taskbar and select "Run blocked program". Click the Update Util Application entry and – when prompted – give it the elevated access it requires.

If you're then prompted to reboot as part of the update process you may get the same alert again, but once complete you shouldn't be bothered with it again until the next time its parent program attempts to update itself, in which case look for a newer version.

Fixing shutdown problems

A few of you have encountered shutdown problems after upgrading from Windows XP. This is probably linked to an incompatible program, file or driver that wasn't removed. Run the Windows Vista Upgrade Advisor tool before upgrading so you can deal with incompatibilities before they cause problems. If you've upgraded to Windows Vista already, you can still use the Upgrade Advisor to track down incompatibilities – visit www.microsoft.com/windows/products/windows vista/buyorupgrade to download the latest version. Once installed, it scans your system and alerts you to any incompatibilities, enabling you to either look for an update or remove the offending item from your PC.

Expert advice
Installation issues

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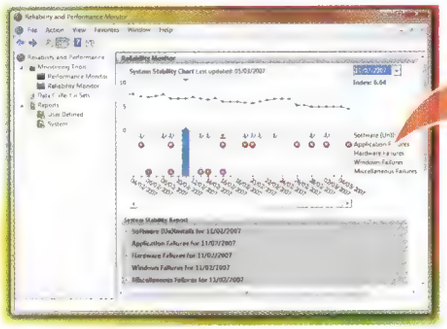
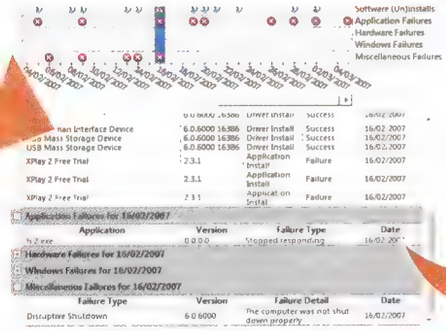
A common cause of installation problems is faulty hardware. There are two easy tests you can perform to check your hard disk and memory. Insert the Vista DVD and proceed as if starting a new installation. When asked to enter a product key, press Shift and F10 and type "chkdsk c: /r" at the command prompt to test your hard disk. To see if your memory is healthy, insert your Vista DVD and press the spacebar while your computer boots. Use the TAB key to select Windows Memory Diagnostics.

Five simple steps to finding and fixing your PC problems

Windows XP wasn't too good at explaining itself when something went awry. That's all changed in Windows Vista – problems can be quickly identified and solved. Here's how to find out exactly what's going on. By James De Vile

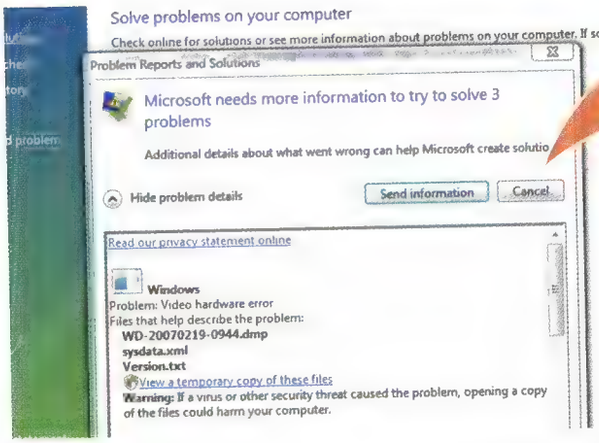


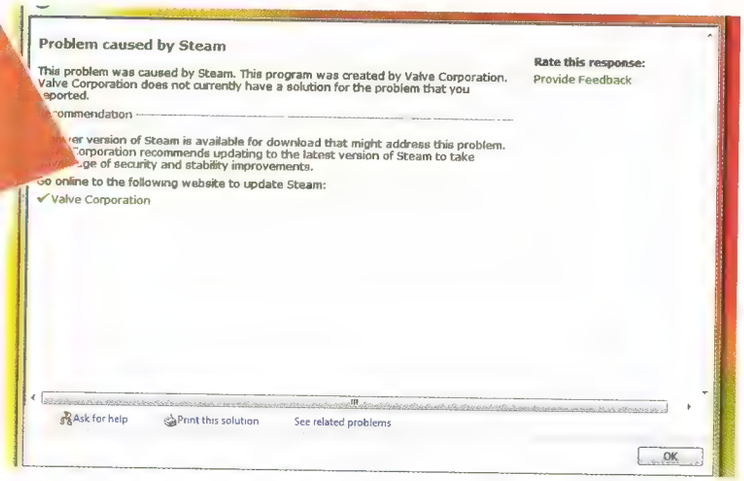


1 OPEN UP The easiest way to see when and where recurring problems have occurred is to open Windows Vista's new Reliability and Performance Monitor, which presents any reliability issues as a day-by-day grid. Type **perform** into the Start menu and press **Enter**, then click **Reliability Monitor** on the left.

2 NAMED AND SHAMED The default view is one month; the second column shows the frequency of application failures. Clicking **each day** will provide a list of programs that have stopped working. If you notice a particular piece of software crashing frequently, for example, it's worth investigating further.

3 BLACK LIST Type **Problem** into the start menu and press **Enter** to open the Problem Reports And Solutions system. Clicking **See problems to check** will show a list of every program that has closed unexpectedly. It'll also record any attempts to install programs that aren't compatible with Windows Vista at all.





4 REPORTING IT Click **Check for new solutions** to send the entire list to Microsoft. You may need to send additional information, but again this is an automatic process. Don't worry about the possibility of sending personal information; it's simply program code that's analysed.

5 PATCH UP Any solutions found will now appear on the main page. If a fix is available via Microsoft, it'll appear as a solution to install, or a link to where an update can be downloaded. If no update is currently available for Windows Vista, you'll be given as much information as possible about when an update may be available and what you can do to try to improve things in the meantime.

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Go on the road with Remote Desktop Connection

Two different types of remote connections can help you get work done and seek real-time assistance when you need it. This tutorial is taken from the book *Breakthrough Windows Vista* from Microsoft Press

Why on Earth do you need a Remote Desktop Connection? If you have to ask, you've never used one. Boy, are you in for a treat. Remote Desktop Connections can save time and aggravation. The technology is already installed in Windows Vista and it enables you to sit at a computer in one place and connect to another computer in a completely different physical location away from you.

For example, you can leave programs running on your computer at work and then see them – the same way you do in the office – when you turn on your computer at home. You can be miles away from the work computer but be working on it just as if you had never left the office. The remote computer screen appears blank to anyone at the remote location.

However, there are a few prerequisites to connecting to a remote computer.

- The remote computer must be turned on.
- The remote computer must have a network or internet connection.
- The remote computer must have Remote Desktop turned on. (See the note regarding limitations below-right.)
- You must have network access to the remote computer. (Internet connections are OK.)
- You must have permission to connect. (You must be on the list of users for the remote computer.)

Allow remote connections

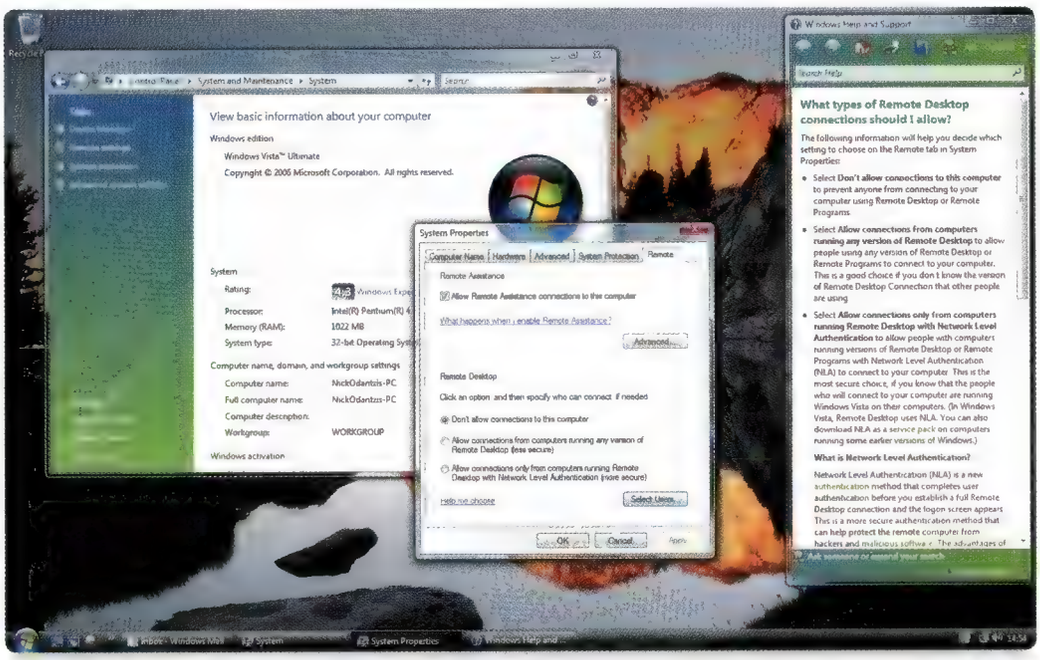
To allow remote connections on the computer you want to connect to, follow these steps:

- On the computer you want to allow a connection to, open the system through the **Control Panel**. (Look under **System and Maintenance** ⊠ **System**.)
- Click **Remote Settings**. Under **Remote Desktop**, select one of the two **Allow Connections** options. Click **Help Me Choose** if you're not sure which one is right for you. You may be prompted for an administrator password or confirmation during this step.
- Click **Select Users**.
- In the **Remote Desktop Users** dialogue box, click **Add** to add your name.
- In the **Select Users** dialogue box, click **Locations**, and choose the location you want to search.
- In the **Enter The Object Names To Select** box, type the name of the user to add. Then click **OK**.
- In the **System Properties** dialogue box, click OK.

Start Remote Desktop

To start Remote Desktop on the computer you want to work from, follow these steps:

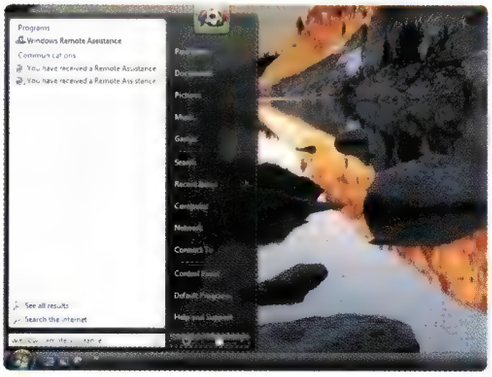
- Open **Remote Desktop Connection** (click the **Start** button and search for 'Remote Desktop Connection').
- In **Computer**, type the name of the computer to which you will be connecting. You can type the IP address of the computer instead of the name if you prefer. If you don't know your computer's name, click **Start**, and then click **Welcome Center**. The computer name is at the top of the window.
- Click **Connect**.



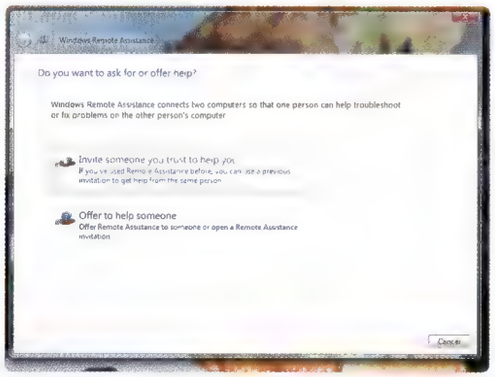
REMOTE CONTROL Allow remote connections from your office PC and you can carry on working at home

NOTE: You cannot use a Remote Desktop Connection to connect to PCs running Windows Vista Starter, Home Basic, Home Basic N or Home Premium. You can only create a connection from those editions of Windows Vista. Also, you can't use a Remote Desktop Connection to connect to PCs running Windows XP Home Edition.

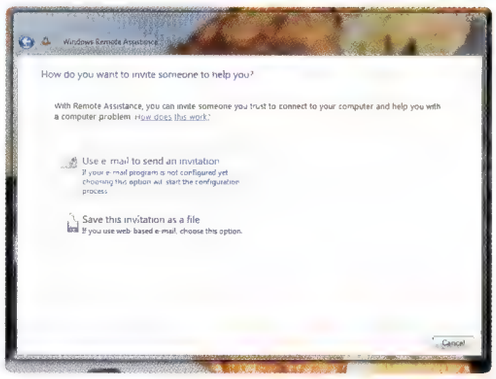
Get help with Remote Assistance



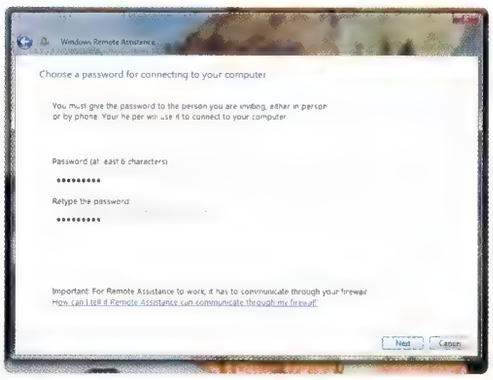
1 SEEK HELP Open Windows Remote Assistance through the **Start** button and the **Start Search** box.



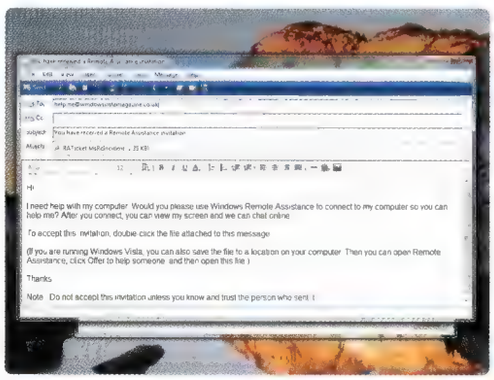
2 SEND AN INVITATION To ask for help from someone who is using a computer somewhere else, click **Invite someone you trust to help you**.



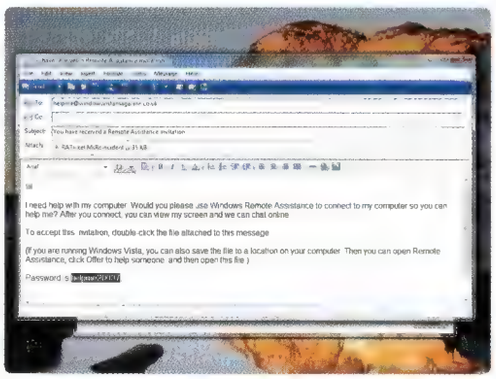
3 EMAIL FOR EXPERTISE Click **Use e-mail to send an invitation** (if you used web-based email, choose the other option).



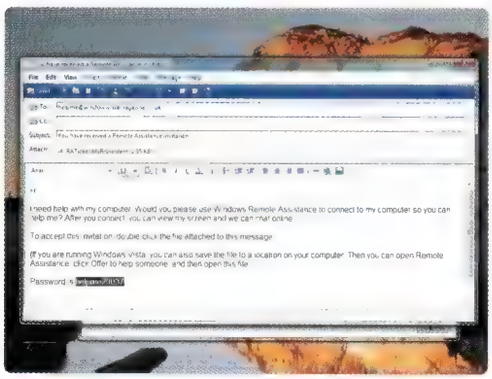
4 PICK A PASSWORD Type a password of at least six characters. Click **Next**. Remote Assistance now opens a new email for you. This might take a minute or two if your email program is not already open.



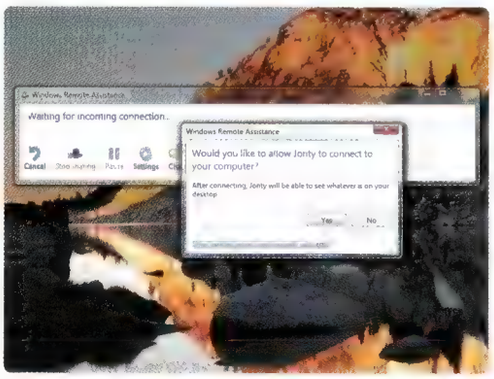
5 DEAR FRIEND Type the email address of the person you are sending the invitation to in the **To** line of the automatically-generated email. Note that an attachment has been added to the email; the recipient will open that attachment to access your computer.



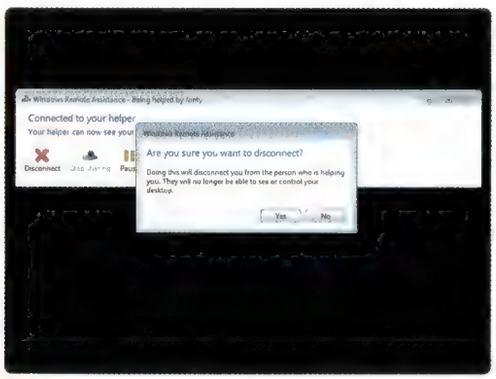
6 DON'T FORGET Be sure to add the password to the email. This is not automatically generated for you and is essential if your chosen assistant is to connect to your computer. Alternatively, you can phone them up to pass on the password.



7 SIT AND WAIT Click **Send**. Note that you must remain connected to Remote Assistance while waiting for the other person to respond.



8 ASK THEM IN When the other person accepts your request for help, you are asked whether that person can connect to your computer. Click **Yes**.



9 JOB DONE When you are ready to disconnect from the session with your helper, click **Disconnect** in the **Connected to your helper** dialogue box.

Save 20% on Windows Vista Plain & Simple at www.woodslane.com.au/windowsvista

DO MORE

Windows Vista is about much more than our everyday computing tasks – it can also help you to become more organised and efficient at work, and to get more enjoyment from interests and activities when you're away from work. The Do More section is where we show you how...

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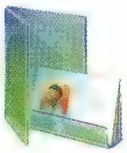
VIDEO CHAT

Stay in touch with friends for free

The world is shrinking thanks to Windows Live Messenger. Now, with Microsoft's LifeCams, keeping in touch with friends and loved ones is easier and cheaper than ever. By James Senior

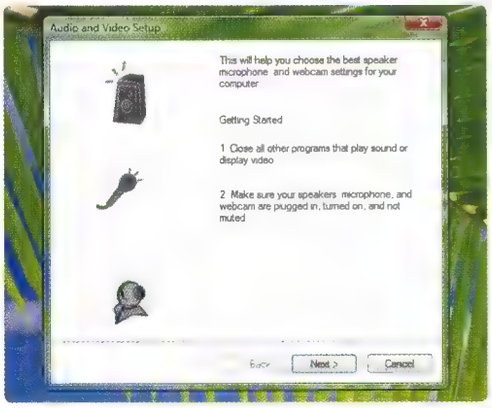


For me, using Windows Live Messenger is part of everyday life, both at work and at home. It's invaluable for keeping in touch with friends and family over long distances – and saves a lot of hard-earned money on expensive, lengthy phone calls. Also, if I need to ask a colleague a question here at Microsoft, I can just type out a quick message to them and they get right back to me.

Instant messaging has come a long way in the last few years, from the humble roots of pure text-based conversations to messages with more engaging features such as 'emotions' and animations. The latest version of Windows Live Messenger has more recently incorporated shared folders, PC-to-PC voice calls, PC-to-telephone calls and now video messaging. Using an internet connection, you can see and hear your contacts even if they are on the other side of the world – and it's great to see the reactions of an old mate in England.

I've been trying out Windows Live Messenger in conjunction with Microsoft's LifeCam VX-1000 webcam, and I've been surprised at how easy it is to set up and use. Each of the Microsoft LifeCams has been designed with Windows Live Messenger in mind, and all come equipped with features to help you stay in touch, such as Windows Live Call buttons to start your video chatting quickly and easily. You can also use special effects during video chats, such as snow fall and butterflies, which add an element of fun to your video conversation.

Follow the steps below to get everything set up. You'll be amazed at how easy it is with the Windows Vista Audio and Video Setup wizard guides to help you.



1 SOUND AND VISION Before you get going with video calls, you need to make sure everything is working correctly. The **Audio and Video Setup** wizard guides you through configuring your speakers, microphone and webcam so that they are set up correctly.

"Wow" Camera tricks

Use the Microsoft LifeCam's features directly inside Windows Live Messenger, and experience a real-time conversation with your friend or family member as if they're in the room with you.

Making a video call

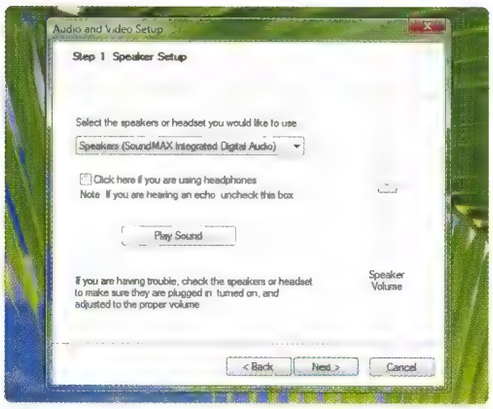
Hello...
Click here to start your video call.

The bigger picture
Clicking here sends the program into full-screen video chat mode.

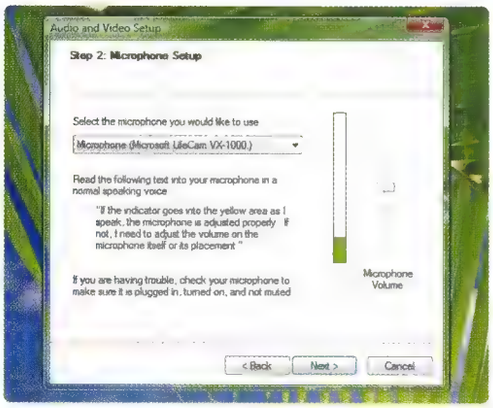
I can't hear you!
You can adjust the volume or mute the microphone using these controls.

Spice it up
If you like, you can even choose a funky foreground animation or picture for your webcam image.

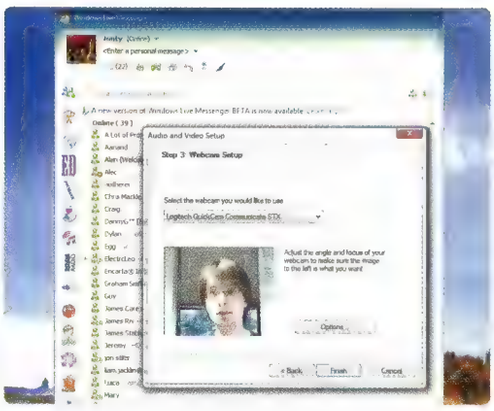
Different sizes
Drop this box down if you want to resize the video windows.



2 SOUND CHECK Choose which audio output to use (in my case, I'm using Speakers) then click the **Play Sound** button to check you can hear everything OK. If necessary, simply adjust the volume using the control on the right-hand side of this panel.



3 VOICE CONTROL The Microsoft LifeCam VX-1000 comes with a built-in microphone, so I've selected that to pick up my voice. After reading out the sample text, the **Setup** facility works out the level that the microphone volume should be set at.



4 PICTURE THIS This step enables you to tweak the picture being taken by your webcam. Click **Options** to tweak the image by changing things such as contrast and brightness. Now you're ready to make your first video call in Windows Live Messenger.

Treat your ears to surround sound

Sound is all around in Windows Vista – so long as you've got the right kit and settings. Alec Meer looks into the options available and works on feng shui for your speakers

Surround sound is the best way to immerse yourself in a film or game. There's an array of types available, but let's look at the difference between upmixing and discrete channels.

Upmixing is when a stereo audio source is processed so that it's spread across four to eight speakers. As the stereo stream is 'torn' into smaller chunks, the results aren't always fantastic. Some PC sound chips, like the Creative Soundblaster Xi-Fi range, can perform such trickery but upmixing is most common on home cinema amplifiers – usually in Dolby Pro-Logic II form (although Pro-Logic I is still common). So, if you're running your Windows Vista PC hooked up to a telly in the living room and use it as your primary DVD, TV and music playback device, you'll want to connect it to a home cinema audio set-up. A single digital optical or coaxial cable will carry everything the PC outputs, audio-wise, to the amp, which will then process the signal and share it across the front, centre and rear speakers.

Then there's digital, or discrete, surround sound. In this case, the audio stream (most commonly from a DVD, but recently also from stuff like HDTV) is split at source, and specific noises only come from one place. For instance, the final shoot-out in *Lethal Weapon 12: So Very Tired* could have Mel Gibson shouting nonsense through the centre speaker, bullet noises from the left and right, an exploding car from the rear left and a police siren from the rear right.

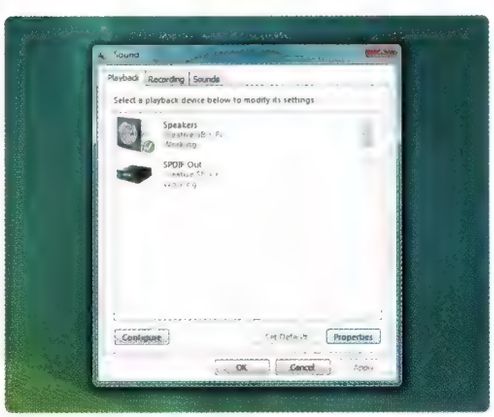
The two most common forms of digital surround are Dolby Digital (DD) and Digital Theater System (DTS). If you're going for the set-up previously described, your amp should be able to handle it. Otherwise, connect your PC directly to a 5.1, 6.1 or 7.1 speaker set-up (the first number denotes the number of 'satellite' speakers; the '1' refers to a subwoofer to handle bass tones). You need a decoder to turn the jumble of digital data into surround sound. Traditionally, this has meant buying an application, but not now – Windows Vista is the first Microsoft operating system to include built-in DD decoding.

"Wow" Mix it up

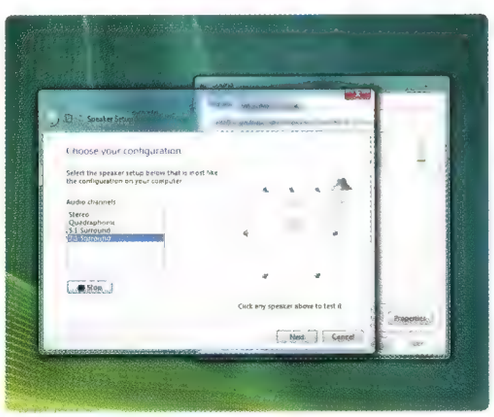
You can alter the volume of each application individually by right-clicking on the system tray volume icon and clicking **Mixer**. Great for disabling a web site sound, or killing a game soundtrack.

Get the best audio

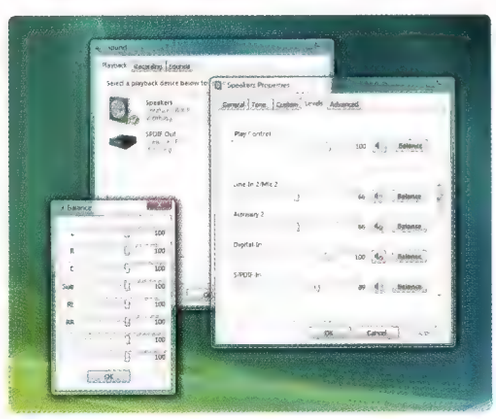
Tweaking surround sound in Windows Vista



1 SPEAKER COUNT Windows Vista needs to know how many speakers you've got before it can do its 'surroundy' thing. Right-click on the volume icon in the system tray, select the **Playback** tab; click on **Speakers** then **Configure**.



2 TESTING, TESTING Choose the appropriate set-up, then click **Test**. Windows Vista will play a sound through each speaker so that you can check the sounds are coming from the right place. If not, you'll need to check your audio cables.



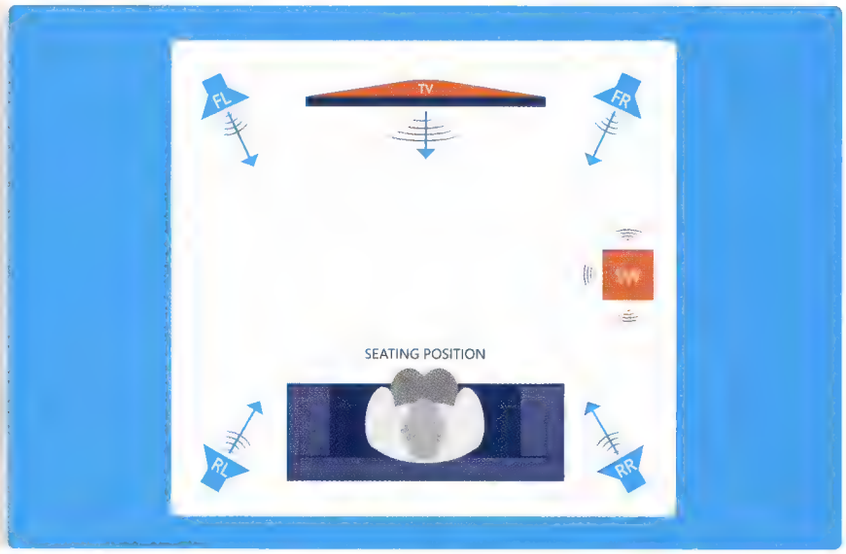
3 AUDIO ADJUST Go back to **Playback**, select **Speakers** again, then **Properties**. Under **Tone** you can alter the bass and treble levels, or go to **Levels** and select **Play Control** and **Balance** to change the volume of each speaker individually.

Ideal speaker placement

Location, location, location

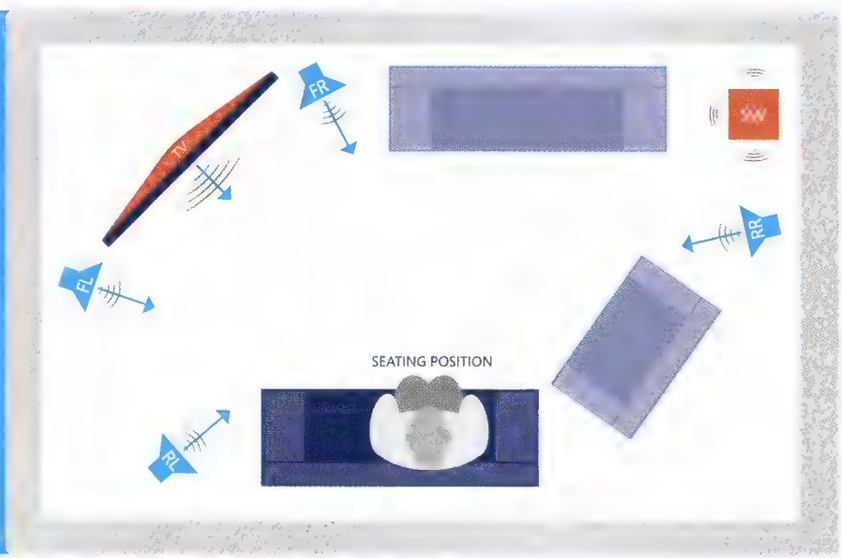
SQUARE ROOM

If your room is square, then try to place the PC/TV in the middle of one wall. The front left and right speakers then go either side of it, at least a metre away and angled slightly inwards. The sub should be in the middle of a wall and the rear speakers behind the sofa pointing inwards.



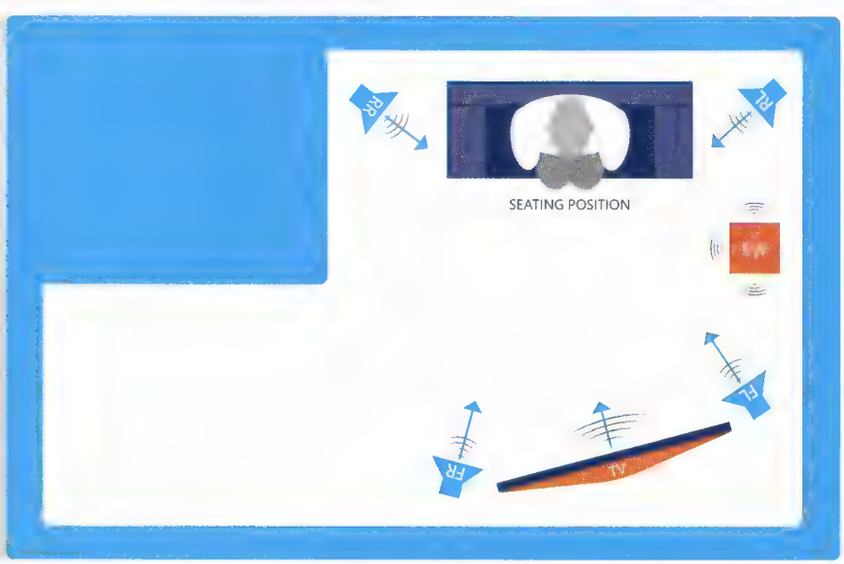
RECTANGLE ROOM

If your display's in a corner of a rectangular room, things aren't so neat but the set-up is based on the same theory. The front and rear speakers need to point towards you – generally this means the rear ones won't be in corners, but against the wall in a position that aims directly at your ears.



L-SHAPED ROOM

For an L-shaped room, everything's much closer together and more tightly angled in toward you to avoid sound being lost in the area that makes the L's 'foot'. Ideally, the subwoofer has some facing wall to bounce off, rather than disappearing off into the 'awkward' bit of the room.



Surround sound kit

This 5.1 set offers good sound quality for the price – the additional 'tweeter' driver in the front satellites giving clear high-frequency sounds. However, the Inspire's small size and lack of punch mean that it's no substitute for a full-range set-up.
Product Creative Inspire T1600
Price TBC
Web www.au.creative.com

If you're going down the full home cinema route, this eight-channel (ie 7.1) amp is a brilliant performer given the price. As well as supporting every key surround sound format going, it's got an iPod dock and is certified by George Lucas' THX audio labs. Invest in good speakers to make the best of it though.
Product Denon AVR1907 AV
Price $999
Web www.audiotrends.com.au

With an add-in sound card, the Sound Blaster offers some neat tricks. The processor can upmix stereo content (be it movies or music) far more convincingly than something like Dolby Pro-Logic. And it can polish up download music to eliminate dull tones.
Product Sound Blaster X-Fi Xtreme Gamer – Fatal1ty Professional Series
Price $276
Web www.i-tech.com.au

Get the best exam results

Anyone can beat the studying blues with a little foresight and help from Windows Vista. We're here to show you that it's as easy as a click of the mouse. By Tamsin Mackay

"Wow" Windows Meeting Space

Studying can be lonely but this fab tool enables you to work face-to-face with up to nine Windows Vista users over a network.

Benjamin Franklin said that the two certainties of life are death and taxes, but he forgot exams. While the first two are out of your control, you can take charge of how well you do this semester by using the power that technology puts at your disposal.

Schedule it

While there is no magic formula for studying, there are some tried and tested ways of getting yourself into the best position for a pass. To start with you need to schedule. Don't pin yourself down with unrealistic deadlines, and revise them when necessary. A good schedule helps you to allocate neat units of time but doesn't stop you living a little. The Windows Vista Calendar can alert you minutes, hours or days ahead of time, plus you can make recurring reminders for set study times. Many universities offer the iCalendar format, with which Windows Vista is compatible, listing exam times, podcasts and more. The reminders bingle, bongle and beep on your PC and all other devices that you've synched up to your Calendar. Even if you're down the pub...

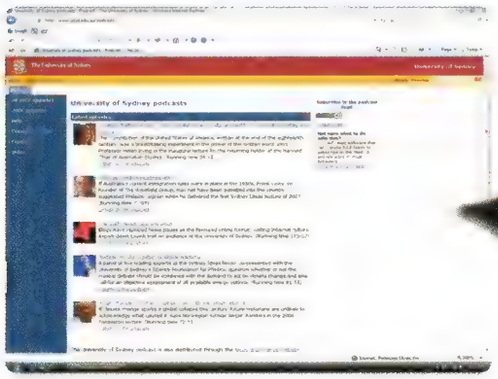
Install Countdown Pro (countdown-pro.immortal-software.blueprograms.com) to use the Windows Vista Desktop Sidebar and scare yourself into sticking to your plans. Or download Agenda 1.3 (go to www.softpedia.com and type it into the search box), which even has a speech function that reads your reminders out loud. If you have a tendency to fall asleep mid-study, as I do, set reminders to explode at regular intervals during your study time.

Understand it

Go to a café or a park when reading through material – a relaxed environment can help you to absorb more information. This is when a Tablet PC can come in handy. And Windows Live Messenger (get.live.com/messenger/overview) is perfect for linking up with fellow students to test each other, or you can use a webcam for video chat.

Universities are also slowly waking up to the possibilities of broadband internet. Podcasts of various subjects, sometimes even lecture recordings, are available to download for free. It's a great way to study when your eyes are too tired to carry on reading. The University of Sydney (www.usyd.edu.au/podcasts), Australian National University (http://academicskills.anu.edu.au/podcasts/index.php), University of Queensland (www.uq.edu.au/news/rss/podcast-uqnews.xml) and the University of Melbourne (http://upclose.unimelb.edu.au) all offer podcasts on a range of topics, while the latter also offers 'i-lectures' to registered students.

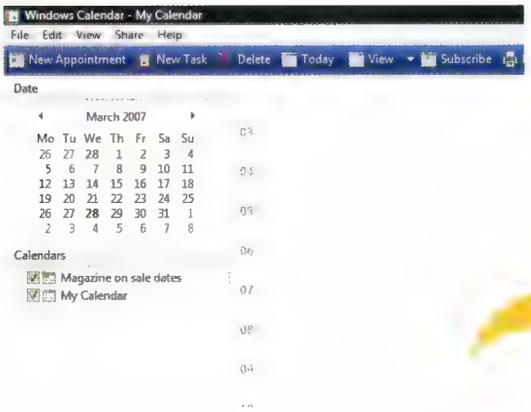
With all this study you'll probably be pretty hungry by now. Make use of the fact Windows Vista is one of the most secure systems yet and order some pizza online.

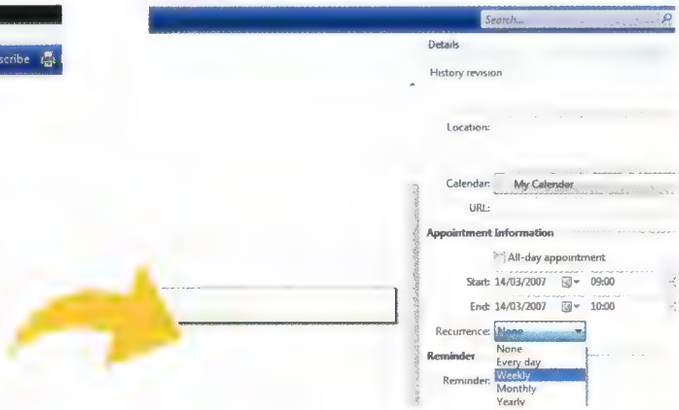


SOUNDS OF WISDOM When your eyes can read no more download a podcast for instant enlightenment

Keep to the agenda

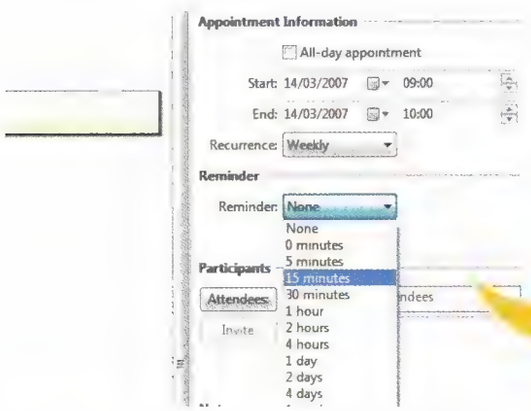
Use Windows Calendar to get on top of your revision schedule

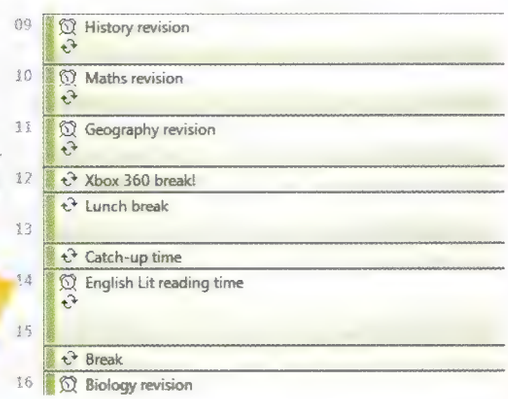




1 GET STARTED Type 'cal' into your Start menu search bar and click **Windows Calendar**. Use the date viewer in the top left corner to find a date when you plan to start revising.

2 ADD APPOINTMENT Right-click a time slot in the calendar and select **New appointment**. You can give it a meaningful name and alter the time for this piece of revision on the right-hand side of the calendar.





3 RECURRING EVENTS To save you having to add a repeat entry every week, you can set a recurrence – for example, every Wednesday at 9am it's history revision, with a 15-minute reminder beforehand.

4 FINISH UP Keep going, adding your various revision slots, choosing how often they should recur and whether you want a reminder for each one. Don't forget to schedule in some breaks!

Get some new gadgets!

Tired of studying? Feel like the walls are closing in? Well, Windows Vista is just as good at giving you a break as it is in helping you to get your studies going. Go to gallery.live.com and immerse yourself in a multitude of toys, gadgets and Sidebar fun. My favourite is My Mood-Clock. No matter how happy, sad or grumpy you feel, you can let everyone know. It helps you to express your mood to your visitors on Live.spaces and you'll find yourself enjoying glaring back at it when the mood takes you.

MOODY BLUES Whether down in the dumps or up in the clouds, My Mood-Clock lets everyone know how you feel

Five top tips

Dr Bill Ashram is a senior lecturer in microbiology at Britain's University of Bradford. He pioneered the use of podcasting as a distance-learning tool at the university and has created a 24/7 learning environment with iTunes. He was also a finalist for The Times Higher 2006 Awards for 'Most imaginative use of distance learning'. Here are his tips.

1 Time is precious so use it wisely. You need a decent planner to pace yourself and help you set realistic deadlines.

2 There is no substitute for a really good set of lectures or seminars. Many lecturers, if you ask their permission, will let you record their lectures. This really helps and gives you the chance to review the lecture.

3 An increasing number of students use Google and Wikipedia to help with revision, projects and assignments. I recommend them as a first stop for your work – however, academics like their students (especially for final exams) to use and/or cite the original source of information.

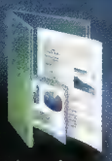
4 Many of the top academic journals and reviews have RSS feeds. This is really cool, especially if you have signed up to a free RSS aggregator such as Bloglines. A real time saver!

5 It doesn't matter if you are a biologist or business student, there is a podcast or blog for you. *Nature*, *New Scientist*, *The Economist* and *FT* all have what you need. You could really impress your professor by having the latest information. Why not check out my web site (web.mac.com/billash01/iWeb) and listen to my podcasts?

Warning: technology can be a massive help but there is no substitute for attending lectures, seminars and tutorials!

Protect your home for free with your PC

The internet has revolutionised home security, allowing us to intrude on the intruders. We look at the options available to you. By James Stable



You pull the door shut behind you and set off on your holiday of a lifetime/daily commute/trip to the shops only to start worrying about all your belongings. It's a horrible feeling that can gnaw away at you for the duration of your absence. It's not surprising really, considering that in 2005 the Australian Bureau of Statistics reported that there were 346,000 incidents of break-in, and a further 317,800 attempts.

Traditional security systems do very little to protect your valuables. Sure, an alarm is raised, but how often have you heard a house alarm and rolled your eyes rather than called the police? And, in the event of someone making off with your possessions, it's an unfortunate fact that the criminal may never be identified.

It's a bleak picture indeed. But, as always, technology can save the day! A new breed of internet-linked security systems can ensure that the police will arrive at the scene, and with the option of 'televised evidence' the police now stand a much better chance of catching their man. Systems incorporating networked cameras now enable us to view our homes over the internet, or we can download software to integrate with existing webcams (without the need to buy expensive motion sensor cameras). There are even simple home monitoring systems that link to mobile devices. Your home has never been safer.

Boost your brain power by playing games

If you think games are draining the intelligence of today's youth, you should think again. Games are now more difficult and demanding than any other form of entertainment. In fact, they're making us smarter. By Tim Edwards

1 Play Brain Training

Designed to be played for just a few minutes a day on Nintendo's DS console, Brain Training offers a series of quick mind tests to give your brain a workout. As you train each day, your 'Brain Age' decreases. That's a good thing, by the way.

2 Run a players' guild

Created by massive multiplayer online games, the leading guilds are extraordinary organisations. Essentially, they're groups of hundreds of people dedicated to achieving 'firsts' within the game. The first kill of a dragon, for instance, or the first group to enter a dungeon. To run such an organisation, you need the ability to resolve disputes, babysit new members and more besides. It's a perfect training ground for honing your management skills, and big business is beginning to notice. Apparently.

3 Sink a cargo ship

It's long been acceptable for pilots to train in simulators, but can we train ourselves with virtual problems? The answer is yes. Take Silent Hunter 3 and 4, both submarine simulations; the former putting you in control of a U-boat sinking Atlantic cargo shipping during WW2, the latter asking you to hunt Japanese carriers in the Pacific theatre. At the hardest levels, the games ask you to plot your own torpedo intercepts, using basic trigonometry. There's even an in-game protractor. It beats maths homework.

4 Nuke the world

Think you've got a stressful day job? Try running the world. The Civilization series of games asks players to take a small tribe of rock-wielding cavemen into space, founding cities, building monuments and discovering technology along the way. It's a massive intellectual challenge, with difficult decisions to be made at every step of the way.

5 Run a city

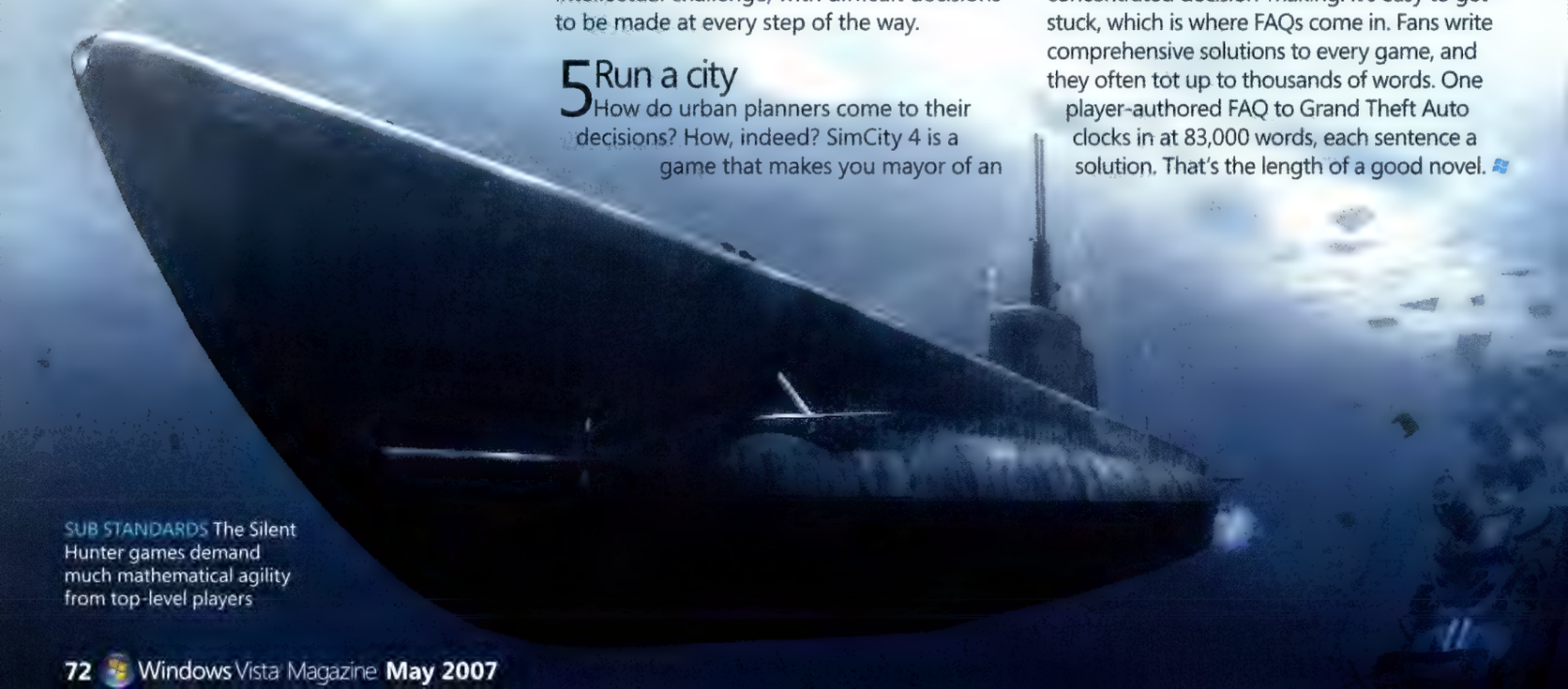
How do urban planners come to their decisions? How, indeed? SimCity 4 is a game that makes you mayor of an up-and-coming neighbourhood. It's almost on-the-job training for city planners and a useful first entry point for debating local issues. It's a game that can teach social empathy and scientific enquiry.

6 Enter a Zen state

Your unconscious mind functions in very strange ways. Fast-paced games such as Quake III or Unreal Tournament can encourage an almost Zen-like state, where instincts override normal decision-making. Psychologists describe this state as 'flow', where players allow their unconscious mind to take control of their reactions. That unconscious mind can be trained and games offer the perfect route.

7 Complete a bestseller

The biggest selling games, such as the Zelda series, demand hundreds of hours of concentrated decision-making. It's easy to get stuck, which is where FAQs come in. Fans write comprehensive solutions to every game, and they often tot up to thousands of words. One player-authored FAQ to Grand Theft Auto clocks in at 83,000 words, each sentence a solution. That's the length of a good novel.



SUB STANDARDS The Silent Hunter games demand much mathematical agility from top-level players

OPTION 3 SECURITY SOFTWARE

The alternative 'DIY' option is to use downloadable software from the internet to turn an existing webcam into a security system. This is a much cheaper option than buying expensive software and web cameras that offer little extra benefit in terms of quality.

Plenty of surveillance software is available on the net and some packages are free, such as Surveillizcam Lite, which is on your cover DVD, enabling you to secure your home at no cost. These programs offer the versatility provided by network cameras, although using some of the more advanced features will require a good understanding of internet connectivity.

With minimal fuss you can configure the camera to send stills of any movement detected in your house to your email account. This enables you to see who has called at your house, and alert you to any possible intruders.

The disadvantage of having a constantly monitoring system like this on your PC is that it puts much higher demands on your computer's memory. We also found these types of programs unreliable and unstable, with frequent crashes and unpredictable results that bordered on the infuriating.

This kind of downloadable software is generally a lot less user-friendly than the polished versions that come with network cameras, and little help is given in the way of tutorials to set up the camera. The best that we could find was a program called WebCam Looker, which enables you to set up a monitoring system and have motion-capture still images sent to your email inbox. You can even have an SMS alert sent to your mobile, in which case you can race to your computer to see what's happening in your home.

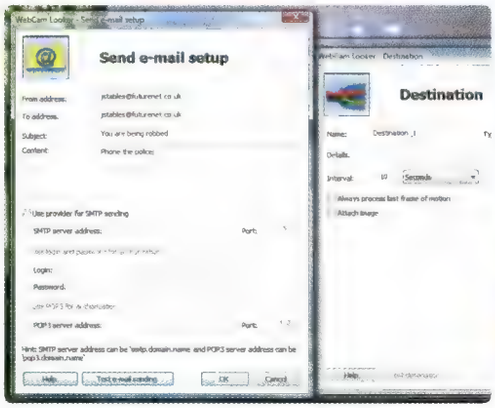
Stills can also be viewed from the internet by setting up free hosting with FTP upload facilities. You can even set the page to save a still every second, building up a range of pictures where you can choose the best mug shot of your oblivious intruder.

"You can even have an SMS alert sent to your mobile phone"

Reader opinion
Home security

Paul Mallett

"As someone whose neighbours have been burgled very recently, security is on my mind at the moment. Unfortunately, traditional alarms just seem to be an annoyance for everyone! The idea of having my own webcams and being contacted via email or SMS is really appealing. I can see myself installing such a system in the near future so I can relax on my next holiday!"



4 MAIL MAN Choose **Send e-mail** from the drop-down list then select **Mail Setup**. Input the outgoing and incoming email addresses as well as your message text. You may have to set up the SMTP settings with details of your incoming and outgoing email servers.

5 YOU'VE BEEN FRAMED When the camera detects movement you'll be emailed a picture of the intruder. You can personalise your email subject line and text so it grabs your attention. When you open it an image file will be attached, hopefully capturing the face of your hapless intruder.

Three to consider

This internet camera enables you to send live video to a web site, which you can then view wherever you are. You can also set up text and email alerts when any movement is detected.
Product Linksys Compact Wireless-G Internet Video Camera
Price $181
Web www.securitycams.com.au

The Secure Pro LS-90 six piece pack gives you the choice of which security company you want monitoring your property, and the option to install it yourself. There's a built-in automatic dialler that will call up to eight people if the alarm is triggered.
Product Secure Pro LS-90
Price $570
Web www.securepro.com.au

While we're not always impressed with the software that turns your webcam into a security camera, it's a cheap – sometimes free – option. This reasonably-priced package is the pick of the low-cost software bunch. You can set up email alerts with stills of any movement detected and upload pictures to FTP hosting sites.
Product WebCam Looker
Price US$25
Web www.felenasoft.com/webcamlooker

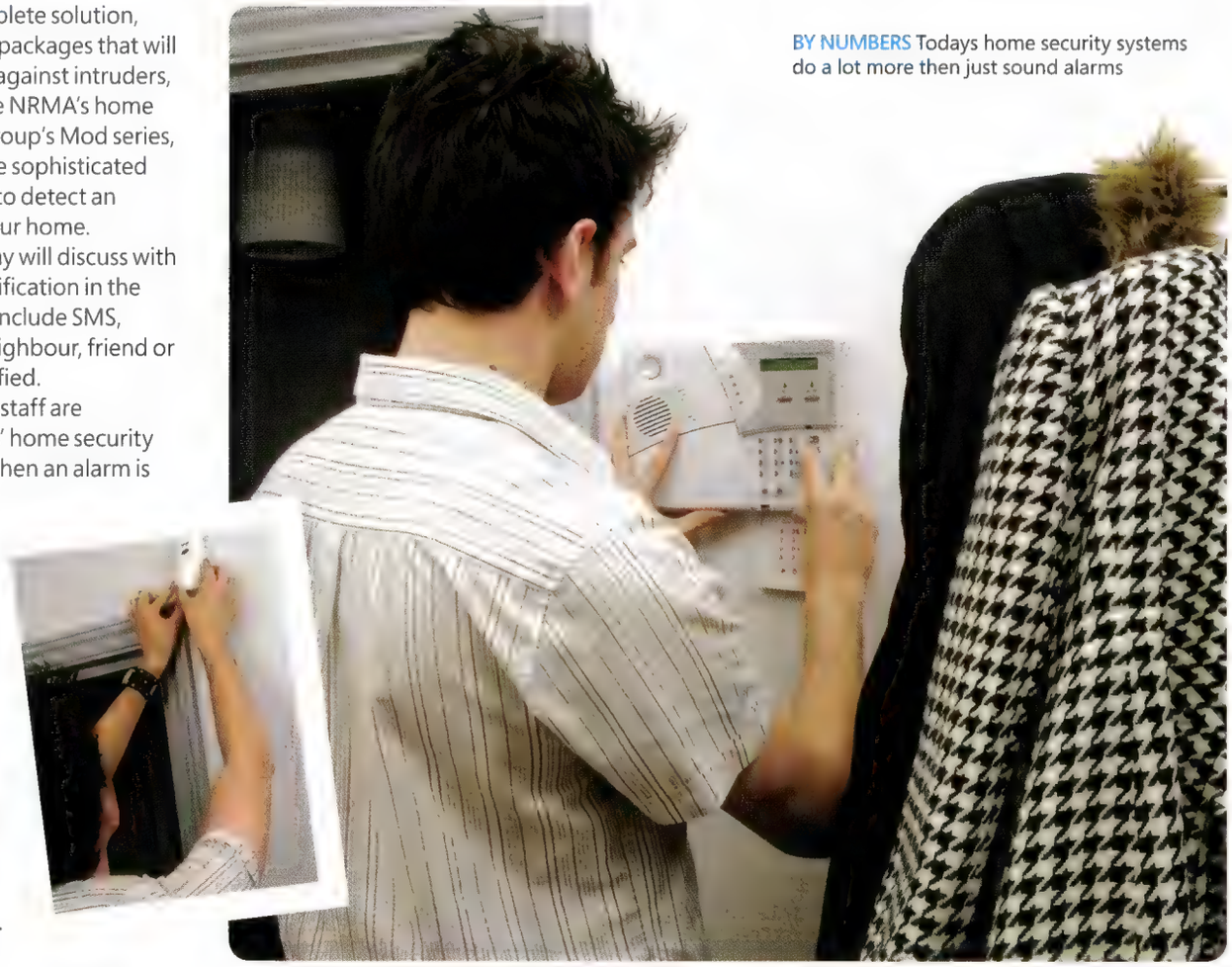
OPTION 2 HOME SECURITY PACKAGE

If you require a more complete solution, there are advanced security packages that will protect you and your home against intruders, fire, and personal attack. The NRMA's home security systems, Modern Group's Mod series, and other similar systems use sophisticated motion sensing technology to detect an unauthorised presence in your home.

During set up, the company will discuss with you the many options of notification in the event of a break in. This can include SMS, phone, email, or having a neighbour, friend or the emergency services notified.

In the case of the NRMA, staff are monitoring their subscribers' home security systems around the clock. When an alarm is triggered the NRMA will be automatically notified. They will then try to determine if its a false. If it's deemed to be a genuine emergency, the authorities will be called.

The price of advanced alarm systems varies depending on how big your house is, what optional extras (like wireless systems or extra sensors) you choose to install, and what type of monitoring you subscribe to.



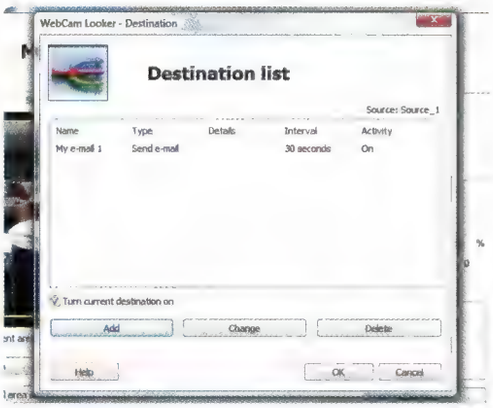
BY NUMBERS Todays home security systems do a lot more then just sound alarms

How to receive email alerts

Beat the burglars in five easy steps with WebCam Looker

1 KEEP 'EM PEELED Install the WebCam Looker software and ensure that current drivers for the webcam are also set up. When you plug in your camera, start WebCam Looker and dismiss the wizard box. You should now see a live image feed of the area you want to monitor.

2 GET SET Choose the **Settings** menu on the bottom of the viewing area. From this menu you can set destinations for images taken on your PC and set up web servers. To set up your email alerts to keep you posted while you're away click **Use Motion Detector.**



3 FEED ME Click **Detector settings** to set the preferences for WebCam Looker's motion sensors. Next select **Destinations** to choose the place your feed images will be sent. You can choose from email, web, FTP, HTTP and local network. Next select **Add new destination.**

Our expert's opinion

Alex Carmichael, director of technical and membership services at the British Security Industry Association, praises the emergence of home user security technology

"Any system that enhances security for the home user is a good thing. This new webcam technology is smart as it alerts you to any problems and lets you make your own judgment on what to do.

"This kind of technology is not new – they have been around since the late '90s. What is new is the amount of people using broadband, meaning technology is more accessible.

"Although there are many systems it's impossible to say which is best; they all have different outcomes that are specific to the needs of the user. However, one constant is that burglars assume there won't be anyone home when they break in and that they won't be identified. Video – or image – capturing technology is a great deterrent for burglars.

"In the future you could set up a recorded message where you can tell the intruder he's being recorded. In that instance most burglars would run."

LOOKING GOOD Internet cameras are easy to set up and many connect wirelessly to your PC

KEEP WATCH Your humble webcam can now look after your home while you're away

OPTION 1 THE INTERNET CAMERA

Most of us now have a broadband connection. If you do, you can install an internet camera that plugs directly into your home network and use it for security monitoring purposes. Many of these cameras use integrated web servers and a unique address system, allowing you to jump online and check the status of your home from anywhere in the world.

This kind of integrated web server doesn't make too many demands on your PC's memory, and most network cameras will integrate wirelessly to your existing home network so you don't have to worry about a load of extra cables trailing around your house. You can also link more than one camera up to the system at a time.

The Linksys Compact Wireless-G internet camera is very simple to set up – just install the provided software on to your machine and plug the camera into your router or switch. The camera then becomes another location on the network with its own unique internet (IP) address. You have the option to set up email alerts when the camera is triggered and establish a secure web page so that you can view the camera over the net.

There's also a program that links the camera to selected 3G phones, enabling you to view stills and check the camera status. If you receive one of these alerts you can log on, view the camera remotely and decide whether you want to raise the alarm.

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AUSTRALIA'S #1 XBOX 360 MAGAZINE! PLAYABLE DEMOS EVERY MONTH!

XBOX 360

THE OFFICIAL AUSTRALIAN XBOX MAGAZINE

Reduce your PC's environmental footprint

In green terms, PC stands for Pretty Catastrophic: making these machines poisons the planet and we're wasting millions of dollars by keeping our systems on standby. But don't despair. It's easy to be green **By Gary Marshall**

We've all seen the photos: polar bears teetering on ice cubes, tornadoes from Innisfail to Kansas and frogs raining down in Freo. Well, perhaps not that last one – but Mother Nature, it seems, is wreaking revenge for our environmental abuse. Unfortunately, PCs are part of the problem. Making them is an environmental menace, using them wastes energy, and dumped desktops poison the planet. Fortunately, we can do something about it.

One of the biggest problems is dumping. PCs contain lots of hazardous chemicals and, with millions of PCs dumped in landfills every year, many of those chemicals end up in the soil. The situation is even worse in Asia, where much of the West's obsolete equipment ends up. Greenpeace scientist Kevin Bridgden has visited Chinese breakers' yards and reports: "They are horrific. In Southeast China I found acid baths leaching into streams; they were so acidic they could dissolve a coin in just a matter of hours".

According to the IPCC (the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change), Australia is likely to be one of the worst affected continents of climate change. Simple things like leaving electrical appliances on stand by, rather than switching them off, generates four million tonnes of extra CO_2 per year. All that wasted energy costs us around $1.8 billion per year.

Green PC guide

Green computing needn't be difficult. If you're looking for a new PC, buying second hand is the greenest (and cheapest) option – but even buying new can be green if you look for kit that doesn't eat electricity. While a standard PC might use around 200 watts, high-end gaming PCs use several times that amount. Green gamers might be better off with an Xbox 360 than a high-end PC – its graphics card can draw up to 120W of power.

You don't need to buy a new PC to be green, though. Using the power options available with Windows Vista is a big help – you can make almost every component more energy-efficient – and unplugging unnecessary USB devices reduces your PC's power consumption. Minimising the number of running programs helps, too: the more your PC does, the more power it needs. When you're away from your PC, use Shut Down instead of Sleep.

Last but not least, there's recycling. You can recycle your printer paper, toner and ink cartridges and buy recycled replacements, and you can choose second-hand or refurbished kit and components rather than new ones. When your PC approaches obsolescence you can recycle it too: this year manufacturers will offer take-back schemes so you can return unwanted kit (some, such as Dell, have already started) or you could do what we do and either sell old systems on eBay, give them to family and friends or donate them to charity. Just remember to securely wipe the hard disk first – or you might find that someone's used your online banking to recycle all your cash.

CIRCUIT BREAKERS The remains of electronic equipment in a scrapyard in China. Vast amounts are illegally shipped as waste from Europe, USA and Japan to countries in Asia as it is cheaper to dump the problem on poorer countries

©Greenpeace/Natalie Behring-Chisholm

How green is your PC?

Six ways to stop it treading on the environment's toes

1 Making IT

The problem Manufacturing PCs is five times more wasteful than making cars. A 2004 study found that to make one desktop you need 240kg of fossil fuels, 22kg of chemicals and 1,500kg of water. [Source: UN University]
The solution Check out used/refurbished PCs before buying new.

2 Wasting IT

The problem Leaving monitors on standby wasted $100 million in 2005, generating 220,000 tonnes of unnecessary CO_2. [Source: Energy Saving Trust]
The solution Switch them off!

3 Breaking IT

The problem Electronic and electrical waste is among the fastest-growing types of trash in the world and is likely to reach 40 million tonnes a year soon – enough to fill a line of dump trucks stretching half way around the world. [Source: Planet Ark]
The solution Recycle old hardware.

4 Shipping IT

The problem In 2003, more than 23,000 tonnes of electronic waste ended up in Asia – often illegally. [Source: Greenpeace]
The solution Stick with reputable recycling programmes such as those run by manufacturers.

5 Printing IT

The problem Australians throw away over 18 million cartridges each year. [Source: Planet Ark]
The solution Planet Ark will happily take old toners and inkjet cartridges, and many retailers sell recycled ones or refill kits.

6 Using IT

The problem Only 15 per cent of us realise that our energy use is a bigger contributor to climate change than cars or factories. Gadget fans generate 4.1 tonnes of CO_2 per person per year. [Source: Energy Saving Trust]
The solution Add energy efficiency to your shopping list when you buy a PC, consider switching to suppliers who use renewable energy sources and use the power options that Windows Vista gives you to make your PC greener.

Keep it clean, keep it green

Save the trees

Using your browser for everyday jobs can make a massive difference to the amount of paper you receive in the post, so if you don't already get online-only statements from your bank, your power supplier and other utilities then why not do so now? You'll save a tree and probably get a discount.

Control your emissions

Everytime you fly or drive, you generate tonnes of carbon dioxide. You can now offset the carbon dioxide you create by purchasing carbon credits from www.carbonplanet.com. Each carbon credit costs $23 and offsets a tonne of carbon dioxide emissions. A car will emit around five tonnes of emissions each year.

Go direct

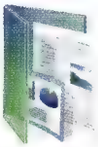
When you're travelling, use Windows Live Local to make sure your route is as green as possible – or invest in a sat-nav system with live traffic information to keep you away from pollution-causing traffic jams. Most sat-navs come with PC software that keeps your maps up to date.

Sit back and watch free TV on your PC

Nothing on TV lately? Don't despair. Here's how to use the many services now offering legal, high-quality, full-screen movies and TV programs. By Nick Clayton

"Wow" Remote control your media

Windows Vista users with Windows Media Centre can use Microsoft's Remote Control and Receiver ($49) to control their media from afar



The free TV service that's getting all the media attention is Joost (www.joost.com), developed by the people behind file-sharing software KaZaA and Skype. Having sold the latter to eBay for around $2.6 billion, they've got enough money to make Joost something special, but it's only been seen by a small group of early testers.

Viewing options

Meanwhile, the competition is heating up. Veoh (www.veoh.com) offers commercial TV programs and movies, as promised by Joost, but it is also allowing users to upload their own videos in the same way as YouTube.

The potential of Veoh is clear in the way it can provide HDTV-class pictures. But this is only possible if the video is downloaded then played, rather than streamed. Viewing 'live' is closer to watching a VHS tape on television.

Picture quality is not always the name of the game at archive.org, but quantity is. With over 56,000 movies, from Charlie Chaplin's first to a documentary featuring the penguin keeper who hosts the Animal Sex Tour at San Francisco Zoo, the site is compulsive.

You can stream the movies using the embedded player but it's far better to download the material, much of which is encoded up to DVD resolution.

Power to the people

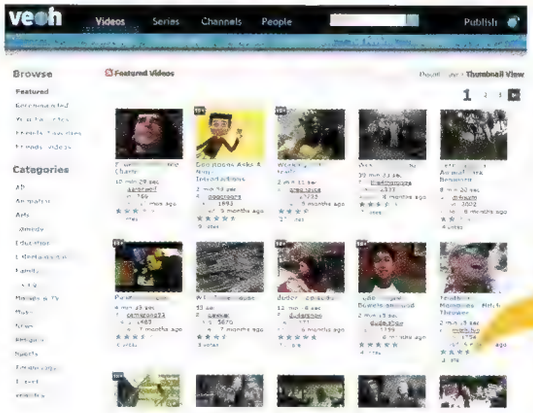
Online video services are in a constant state of development and competition. It's exciting to look into the cutting edge of technology, but by the time I'd finished writing this article I had eight different media players on my PC. And most of them wanted to load on startup, slowing my PC down. The most problematic was the open source Democracy Player (www.getdemocracy.com). This software is intended to be a non-commercial alternative to sites like YouTube. Unfortunately, the lack of money often shows.

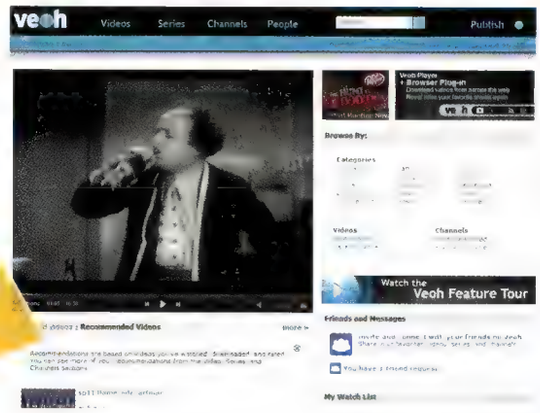
A better example, technically at least, of how activists can use video online, is the website green.tv, the result of a partnership between Greenpeace and the United Nations Environmental Program. It offers a selection of movies, which can be downloaded in a variety of formats or streamed using the embedded player, and it works pretty well. As with most streamed video, it is worth clicking the pause button and allowing the buffer to fill for a minute or two to optimise quality.

VIEWING PLEASURE With a slew of programmes and movies now available online, who needs TV?

Watch videos the Veoh way

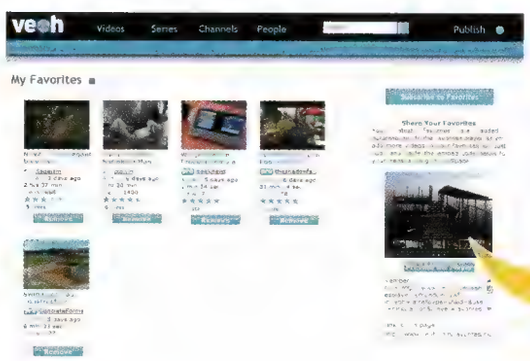
Deciding what to see can be the biggest challenge





1 FIND YOUR VIDEOS You can search by keyword; browse by series, channel, highest-rated, most recent or category, such as 'animation' or 'travel'; or you can take your friends' recommendations.

2 WATCH VIDEOS! Watch immediately through your browser or download to watch on your PC – at full-screen and high-resolution – using the free Veoh player, which also provides other useful functions.



3 FAVOURITES LIST Add videos to your favourites list to share with friends. The list can even be embedded as a Flash player on your web site or blog with a simple piece of code.

4 CUSTOM CHANNEL Create a customised channel featuring your own or other publishers' videos to reflect a topic, point of view or interest. Subscribers receive new videos as soon as you release them.

Turn off your TV set

Traditional TV channels can't ignore the threat from internet upstarts such as YouTube, Joost, and Veoh. Many are beginning to offer content to watch on your PC, from smal snippets of programs to entire shows.

The ABC is leading the the way with full-length shows available online including The Chaser's War on Everything, and dig tv. The Nine Network has also put its foot firmly into online territory, offering downloadable news bulletins (see page 18).

To get an idea of what the future of Australian TV could be like, check out what the UK and US networks are up to. Some networks are uploading the majority of their programs to their websites, as well as archived footage. Channel 4 in the UK is one example. They have put all locally produced content on their website.

Watch this

www.archive.org
First stop for anybody with a few hours to kill. Old movies, concert clips, documentaries, they're all here, including a hilarious collection of British public information films.

wwitv.com
A portal to hundreds of live web channels featuring quality programming, such as QVC and the Backyard Wrestling Network. YouTube has a lot to answer for.

green.tv
There's hope among the global warming gloom in *The Future of the Barrier Reef: Bleached or Bright?* And the music channel is promising.

Current TV
An independent media organisation led by former US Vice President Al Gore. Over 30% of the programs on Current TV are created by viewers. Just upload a video to their website and it could be you that's on television. Visit www.current.tv.

Discover how to become a download star on YouTube Page 78

Become a YouTube star

Online video sharing has made it easy to become a small-screen celebrity with nothing more than a winning smile and a PC. We show you how. By James Stables

Over the course of last year, video-sharing site YouTube went from virtual obscurity to global internet phenomenon. Not only was it given the accolade of *Time* magazine Invention of the Year, internet giant Google bought the site for an eye-watering US$1.65bn before its second birthday. It's not the newest or the most advanced site of its type – Microsoft's recently-launched competitor, Soapbox (soapbox.msn.com) offers better video quality, for example – but it's by far the most popular, and ranks as the 12th most popular site on the web according to analysts Hitwise.

The service has become so popular that some amateur video makers have become online stars from the success of their posts. 21-year-old Brooke 'Brookers' Brodack netted an 18-month TV contract after her home-made sketches built up an audience of millions; Luke Johnson received 100,000 phone calls and several job offers after he posted his phone number on the site; and Sydney's serial hugger Juan Mann appeared on Oprah, his Free Hugs video going on to win him an official YouTube award.

But what does it take to achieve YouTube stardom? I sought advice from online celebrity Peter Oakley. The 79-year-old is more widely known as Geriatric1927. He has reached worldwide fame from his video blog where he gives wisdom and advice. "I had no intention of invading the site as it was obviously used by young people, but I decided to make a video. I was amazed when it got such attention," he told me.

Peter explained: "YouTube is the greatest medium for social interaction. It has become a community with friendships developing between users all over the world. I myself have many very close friends through it."

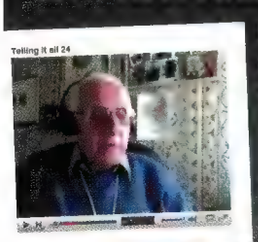
Peter's success shows the limitless appeal of YouTube, and popularity has little to do with age, technical ability or expensive equipment. Despite all the success Peter has achieved, he has done so using relatively simple technology; he uses Windows Movie Maker and a webcam.

The idea

The first thing you need to create your YouTube video is an idea. "It is easy to get attention by making a statement, which will get people arguing. However, the only way to make a really successful video is to have something that attracts viewers," Peter said.

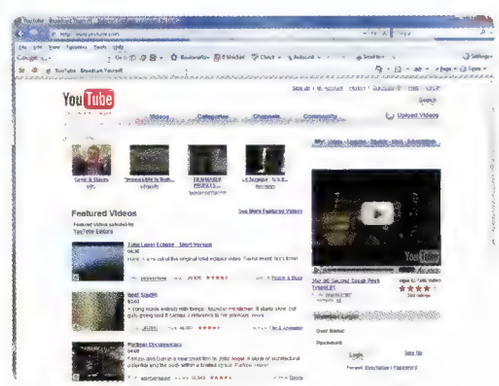
Popular YouTube hits have included video

Stars of YouTube TV
Geriatric1927

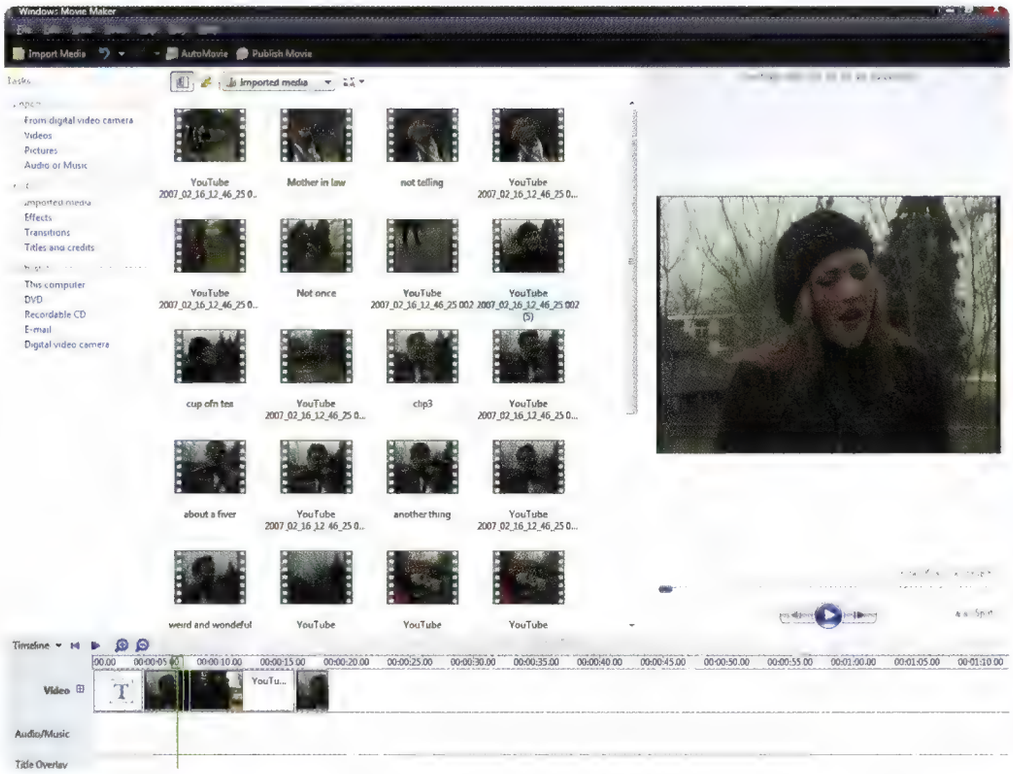


Like Sunday afternoons with your grandad? Then catch up with Geriatric 1927, a 79-year-old British man who is currently the third most subscribed user. His blogs include stories, thoughts and wisdom and these nuggets and have earned him almost 35,000 loyal followers. (Werthers Originals not included.)

HOME STUDIO The Microsoft Lifecam VX-3000 is the perfect tool to propel yourself to YouTube stardom



OVERWHELMING YouTube's popularity has exploded making it the 12th most visited site on the internet



MAKE MOVIES Windows Movie Maker is the perfect way to start editing your films. It's simple, easy to use, and you can create titles, effects and transitions. The best part is that it's included with Windows Vista. Give it a try

blogs like Peter's, comedy sketches and mimed sing-alongs, which have the advantage of requiring little in the way of hardware. You can set up your studio in the comfort of the study, bedroom or shed and just use a webcam like the Microsoft LifeCam VX-6000 ($99 from www.pcau.com). Even cheaper models come with a built-in microphone, so the world can listen to your rants in full stereo quality.

Other popular videos have used more creative elements such as re-enactments of computer games, time-lapse comedy sketches and 'indestructible' blender testing. For this kind of video it would be advisable to invest in more advanced equipment such as a MiniDV digital camcorder.

The cast

Lacking Peter's years of life experience, Brookers' bubbly blonde charm or the jaw-dropping personal dignity deficit of YouTube's less reluctant celebrities, I decided that I wouldn't be able to sustain a solo show. After a bit of team discussion we decided to let the public take the stage instead – a straight vox pop film, with a single question: What's the strangest thing you've bought on eBay?

Opening the cast list up like this might sound more demanding, but it's actually very efficient. You don't require advanced filming techniques or much post-processing, and you don't need to interview many people. The golden online rule: viewers have a short attention span before they click on to something else. In light of this, I decided it would be best to go for just a minute of finished footage.

The production

You need to plan the filming, and shoot plenty of footage, so you can make, pick, and choose sections when editing. My film proved more challenging than expected – a surprising number of people hadn't heard of eBay or indeed the internet – but we filled the gaps by resorting to that endless resource of personal opinion: students.

When you have finished filming, edit your package ready for YouTube. Windows Movie Maker, which comes with Windows Vista, is an easy-to-use application that can make your video look slick and professional.

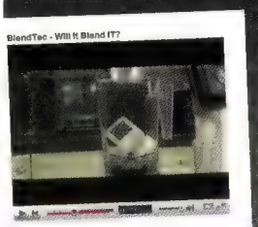
Upload your raw footage on to the computer, and then import to Movie Maker. The film sections will be stored on the clip pane; from here you can split the clips down

Shoot plenty of footage so you can pick and choose sections when editing

"Wow" Add stills to your video

Just click **Pictures** from the **Import** menu and drag it onto the timeline. Drag the box to adjust the length of your beautiful shots

Stars of YouTube TV Blendtec mix-up



Ultimate kitchen utensil manufacturer Blendtec started a series of online challenges called 'Will it Blend?' While this may sound duller than Jamie Oliver in a school, the unbeaten blender has ground iPods, marbles and golf clubs into a fine dust

YouTube in numbers Count the popularity

100 The number, in millions, of videos viewed on YouTube everyday

65,000 The number of videos uploaded to the site everyday

17 The average number of minutes each of the 20 million users spend on the site per session

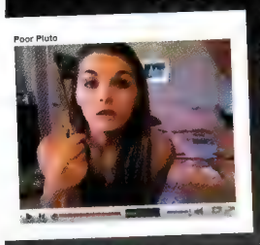
US$1.65bn The amount Google paid in stock for YouTube back in October 2006

20 The number of months YouTube was live online before Google bought it

67 The number of employees managing YouTube

to size, and rename them to avoid confusion. Use very short clips and cut to different shots to pace your film. My vox pop concept leant itself well to this format as we could jump from person to person. If you've only got one fixed scene this is harder to pull off without annoying the viewer but it's still best to avoid lengthy fixed shots. When the clips are sized correctly drag them onto the timeline in the order you want them to be played. To turn your film into a masterpiece you can add titles, transitions and effects; you can even add a soundtrack.

Stars of YouTube TV
Lonelygirl15



'Bree' a sixteen-year-old girl started a phenomenon when videos of her talking about teenage confusion and angst started appearing on YouTube. Fans later uncovered her as the New Zealand actress Jessica Rose, working with two little-known film producers. She remains the most subscribed user on YouTube to date.

With 65,000 videos uploaded on the site every day, competition is fierce. However, you can boost your profile.

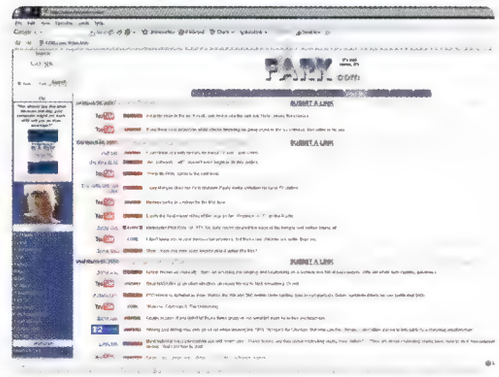
When uploading your video to YouTube start with a title and description that's going to help it show up in searches: vague stuff like 'my home movie' isn't nearly as good as 'my home movie of the cat attacking the hair dryer'. You can also add tags, to give your film more chance of being hit upon. The more tags you use for your movie, the more likely your video will be found.

You should also tap into any other online presence you may be part of. If you use an online journal like MySpace, MSN Spaces or Facebook, you can set up links to your video from these pages and encourage other users to link, too. YouTube also includes automatic embedding code that you can copy and paste into other pages (you'll find it in the Embed box on the top right of the YouTube page) so it's easy to share around.

The promotion

Lacking a ready-made YouTube group, I made the best of what I had. I put the video

> The more tags you use for your movie, the more likely your video will be found



GET LINKED Getting your video linked on sites such as Fark and Digg will earn you thousands of viewers

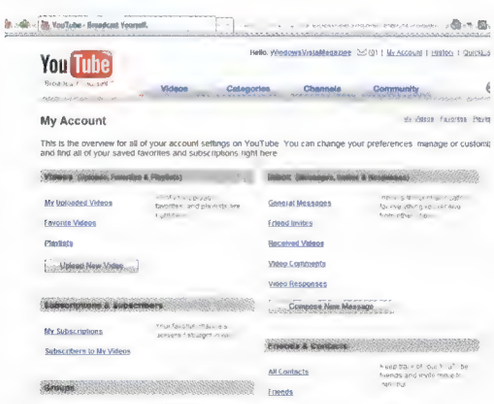
up on the magazine web site and emailed the link to as many friends and family I could think of. I sat back to watch the "Views" counter skyrocket – and, a day later, it had stumbled to a whopping 87.

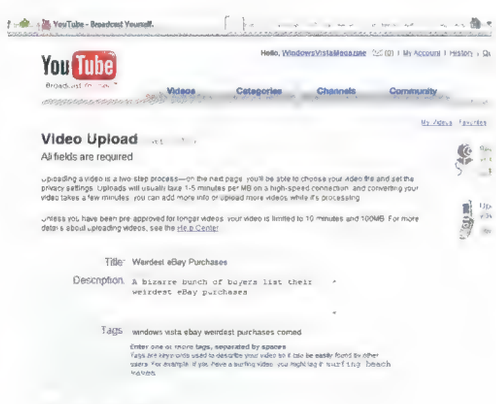
Obviously this wasn't the viral hit I was hoping for. If I wanted this to be seen by everybody, I couldn't rely on it being forwarded. I had to find a captive audience.

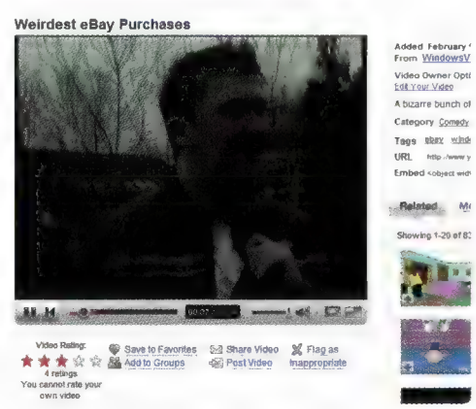
One of the most popular link-sharing sites at the moment is www.digg.com. Thousands of users sign up to a voting system, rating every site submitted. Highly rated sites can then receive thousands of visitors. So, I submitted the link to Digg and waited for the rush of visitors. No such luck. Two days later, five votes and a princely 400 views was all I'd managed; barely enough to clog a dial-up modem.

Amateur dramatics

How to get your creation from camera to the YouTube millions







1 CREATE AN ACCOUNT Register with YouTube and set up an account so that you can upload your videos. Once this has been created go to My Account ➜ Upload New Video.

2 UPLOAD YOUR VIDEO Give your movie a title, description and add tag names, so when people search for related items, yours will be found. Then hit **Go Upload a File** and retrieve the movie.

3 SOAK UP THE FAME Locate the movie from your computer, and allow YouTube to render it, which will take a few minutes. When it is uploaded sit back and try not to let the adulation go to your head.

SHOT VARIATION

When interviewing, encourage subjects to look slightly off to the left or right of the camera; staring directly at the camera can be off-putting to the viewer. Vary the shots, too – close-ups and mid-shots work well. And try not to cut people along the lines of their body, such as the waist.

LIGHTING

If you're shooting outside, try to do it in daylight (night shoots require decent lighting). If you are shooting at night or indoors, light your subject from in front, not above, to prevent shadows. Lighting can be as simple as a desk lamp on one side, and a softer light on the other, which you could try bouncing off a wall.

WHITE BALANCE

In some lights cameras have trouble distinguishing white, which usually turns other colours a strange shade of orange. To counter this you have to sort the white balance, which can be done simply on most cameras in the options menu.

Back to the drawing board, and back to another online institution: www.fark.com. Older than Digg, it's one of the original link-sharing communities. There's no voting system, just a straight page of article listings – which, with a vast and rather anarchic user base, meant I was sharing space with bizarre criminal stories and cable-news coverage of small-town incest.

But even that wasn't a given. Fark submissions are screened before they go up, and a human moderator had to decide my clip was worthy of going on the front page. I just had to hope I got somebody who liked hearing about people buying plant pots.

A day later it appeared on the front page – and it was an immediate hit. The views rocketed past 10,000 in the first day, and three days later had topped out at 14,391. Here at last it found the perfect audience, sparking an extended comments thread where viewers discussed their own unwise buys. Finally, fame was mine. So it wasn't quite the 1.5 million that Seven News attracts, but I was on my way.

What have I learned? It's easy to be a YouTube star if you appeal to people who spend a lot of time online, but they're harder to get in front of than you might think. Still, it took only the first day to sail past the number of people who would have seen it if all I had was a DVD – and with YouTube's community features it's easier to pick up repeat viewers.

My advice for getting famous on YouTube? Start small, see how your first film fares, and you could be surprised by how popular you become.

Stars of YouTube TV
Mark Leung

Not yet in the YouTube top 100 users, but certainly flying high in the directors' listings, Mark Leung's collection of videos range from the ridiculous to the utterly bizarre. His series of on-campus adventures taking the form of early Nintendo video games is not to be missed.

BUY STUFF

The mission of our shopping guide is to help you find products that are suitable for your individual needs and that work well with Windows Vista. Our reviewers' verdicts will never be swayed by advertising revenue or by 'freebies' – only by each product's quality and value for money.

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Our pick of the products....109

Six quick fixes

Solutions that won't break the bank

"I need a camera that's easy to use"

If you want a simple, point-and-click digital camera, then Fujifilm's entry-level digital camera, the FinePix A400 Zoom, could be ideal. There are very few options to get confused about and, with a 3x zoom function and four megapixels picture quality, you can take great digital pictures without spending too much money.

Fujifilm FinePix A400 Zoom
Web www.stallards.com.au
Price $185

"I want some MP3 player speakers for travelling"

Cygnett's Groove Cube is a battery powered portable speaker system with folding speakers for easy transportation. It works with all MP3 players and laptops and comes with everything you need to start churning out the tunes, minus the six AA batteries it takes to run it on the go.

Cygnett Groove Cube
Web www.dse.com.au
Price $49.95

"My batteries keep going flat"

Struggling to find a mains power supply could be a thing of the past with the USB battery, which as its name suggests, recharges from a USB slot on your computer, monitor or other similar device.

USBCELL AA Batteries
Web www.usbcell.com
Price $27.45 (pair)

"I want to get started using a webcam for chatting online"

Look no further than the Logitech QuickCam Family to start you up. It has a universal monitor clip so you can mount it on a CRT, flat-panel, or even a notebook display, and you'll be able to use it with Skype, Windows Live Messenger and range of other messaging software.

Logitech QuickCam Family
Web www.logitech.com
Price $49.95

"I don't want to carry a bulky mouse around"

Mice don't have to be big, awkward devices, as this Ryvita-thin MoGo mouse from Newton Peripherals proves. It uses Bluetooth, so there are no wires to get tangled, and can be recharged from your laptop's PC card slot.

MoGo Bluetooth Mouse
Web www.expansys.com.au
Price $125.95

"iPods are too expensive"

Then how about this player for under $100? From Creative, this tiny MP3 player can play movies, music, and show JPEG images on its 1.18inch screen. It's got 512MB of storage and has up to 10-hours of battery life. More than enough to keep you entertained on the commute to work.

Creative MuVo Vidz
Web www.dse.com.au
Price $99.95

Pick out a portable widescreen

The Windows Vista Sidebar loves a display with extra width. So we put six of the best widescreen laptop models through their paces.

By Alex Kidman. Photography by Matti Puckridge

Psychic I'm not, but when I say that I would make a healthy wager that your next PC will come in laptop form, it's based on more than a mere whim.

Last year, sales of laptops overtook those of the humble desktop for the first time, and it's not hard to see why. Even modest laptops are offering power that can rival their heavyweight desktop brethren, but in a stylish chassis that will slip into a bag to take with you or can be put in a desk drawer out of sight.

Like their desktop counterparts, laptops can be tailored for specific needs. You'll find budget laptops, business laptops, gaming laptops, Media Center laptops and more besides. It's a matter of deciding what type you want and choosing the best of class. To help you sift the wheat from the chaff, here are six in-depth reviews of highly varied models, with six alternatives to put them in perspective.

Besides simple price point, choosing a laptop throws up the complications of display type and physical size. If size and weight is an issue, look for systems with smaller screens – 12 inches and below makes for tiny, lightweight systems that usually have a price premium attached.

Mid-range systems tend to have 15-inch widescreen displays, while high-end entertainment and gaming laptops sport large 17- or even 19-inch screens.

If battery life is among your priorities, laptops that have true mobile versions of processors will enable you to work for longer – three hours or more. Some systems offer enhanced battery packs, which cost a little extra.

If you're looking for a gaming PC, keep an eye out for Nvidia and ATI video cards, which offer superior graphics performance.

WINDOWS EXPERIENCE INDEX

This figure is generated by a new feature that tells you at a glance how powerful your processor, graphics card, memory and hard drive are. It can be used to judge how capable your PC is – the higher the number (up to a current maximum of 5.9) the better the PC will run Windows Vista and other programs. But note that the number is related to the weakest link in the system, not its average – so a PC scoring, say, 2.0 may be weak only in a department that you aren't very interested in.

FUJITSU
LIFEBOOK
lenovo

Stylish and lightweight – but at a cost

Fujitsu Lifebook P7230 **$2,999**

Windows Experience Index **2.8**

Screen 12.1in XGA (1280x768)
CPU Intel Core Solo u1400
Graphics Intel 945GM Express

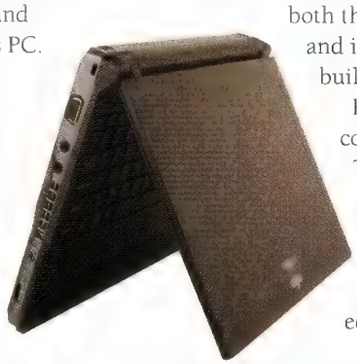
Portability is one of the main reasons we've all fallen in love with notebooks. There's nothing quite like taking your PC wherever you go, whether that's on the road or just across the room.

But, like George Orwell's famous pigs, some notebooks are more portable than others. The Lifebook P7230 is a truly ultraportable laptop, weighing just 1.3kg. Forget notebooks, we've carried textbooks that are thicker and heavier than this PC.

The difference between a 1.3kg notebook and a heavier 2kg-plus model might not sound much, but your shoulder can tell them apart – especially if you have to carry your laptop around all day. You can even shave an extra 100g or so from the P7230 by removing the DVD drive and plugging in a plastic "weight saver" when you don't need it.

> "Like George Orwell's famous pigs, some notebooks are more portable than others"

The Lifebook will also make your wallet somewhat lighter: Fujitsu charging a premium for both the ultraportable size and its Made in Japan build quality.



Portability brings some compromises, however. The integrated Intel Graphics chipset, and the relatively small LCD mean this isn't for games or video editing. The smaller keyboard won't be to every deskbound PC user's tastes, either. Where the P7230 excels is working on the move. It's excellent for use on planes or trains, and its small footprint can be accommodated by any bench or desk.

The Lifebook's relatively low Windows Experience Index score reflects both the Intel graphics and the slightly sluggish 1.2GHz processor. Again this is part of the trade-off between power and portability, Fujitsu opting for an ultra-low voltage chip and integrated graphics to ensure longer battery life – which they claim will last you for up to six hours on a single charge. It's a delicate balancing act that the Lifebook just about pulls off.

You should also consider...

SONY VAIO VGN-TX56GN/W

Big name, small laptop. The TX56 (to its friends) has an 11.1-inch widescreen and comes in a white carbon fibre body. The chip is the same low-voltage number used in the Lifebook, which the Vaio matches almost spec-for-spec, offsetting the slightly smaller screen with an even more impressive claim of nine-hour battery life.

Price $2,999
Manufacturer Sony
Web www.sony.com.au

Our verdict

Buy it if... you're constantly travelling and in need of simple computing power with a dash of style.

Don't buy it if... you want a full-sized keyboard, play a lot of games or need excessive amounts of computing grunt.

The bottom line

An excellent ultra-portable laptop for those who are always on the move.

★★★★☆

An affordable desktop replacement

Acer Aspire 9425WSMi **$2,699**

Windows Experience Index 3.1

Screen 17in WXGA (1280x800)
CPU Intel Core 2 Duo 7200
Graphics NVIDIA GeForce Go 7300

Not everybody buys a notebook because they want to carry their computer around all day. Acer's 9425WSMi sits squarely in the desktop replacement aisle, the kind of machine you'll buy because you want to save space at home, rather than lug a laptop around at work.

As such, the designers haven't spent too long trying to balance features against portability. The 9425 dwarfs the truly portable models in this test, building its feature set around an imposing 17-inch widescreen and full-size keyboard – complete with a number pad, which is something of a rarity in the notebook world.

> "It dwarfs the truly portable models on test, built around an imposing 17-inch widescreen"

The Acer is similar in size and weight to the HP Pavilion dv9205tx, and shares the same Intel Core 2 Duo 7200 2.0GHz procesor. But while the HP designers decided to pile on the features and hang the expense, Acer's engineers throttled back a few specs and shaved over a grand off the price.

The Acer's graphics are the main example. Like the HP it uses an Nvidia card, but a less impressive one that employs shared, not dedicated RAM. It's still well above average for a laptop, however, making this a good entertainment machine.

Like the HP, the Aspire features an integrated 1.3 megapixel webcam, which can be spun around to look over the back of the laptop. It's perfect for video chat over Windows Live Messenger or Skype, and even video blogging.

Given the similarities between the Aspire and the Pavilion, we were surprised at the gulf in Windows Experience Index scores between the two. This is mainly due to the graphics cards. Remove those from the equation and the Acer acquits itself very well, with WEI scores in the high four range across the board. It may not be as lustworthy as the HP, but the extra $1,300 in your pocket is some compensation.

You should also consider...

ASUS W2P

Put some real gaming grunt into your laptop with this Asus. With the ATi Radeon X1700 graphics card, which has its own 256MB of dedicated memory, and the Intel Core Duo T7400 processor, no game or application will slow this laptop down. The large, 17-inch widescreen display will make sure you get the most from the HD DVD drive as well.

Price $3,999
Manufacturer Asus
Web www.asus.com.au

Our verdict

Buy it if... you want a good value desktop replacement.
Don't buy it if... portability is a big issue or you must have the latest games graphics.

The bottom line

A good value PC that's well suited to life at home, rather than on the road.

★★★☆☆

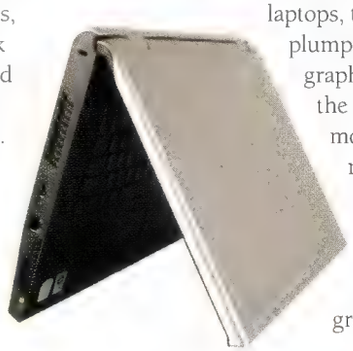
A no-frills laptop that means business

Lenovo 3000 N100 $2,079

Screen 15.4in WXGA (1280x800)
CPU Intel Core 2 Duo T5600
Graphics NVIDIA GeForce Go 7300

As you might expect from a company that bought out IBM's ThinkPad brand two years ago, Lenovo's speciality is business notebooks. The N100 is from Lenovo's 3000 family of laptops, aimed more at individuals and home office users, but it still sports a no-nonsense attitude.

It would be unfair to call the N100 ugly, but next to the super-slim ultraportables, and even the sleek lines of the HP and Acer, the N100 is chunky and plain. There's an upside to this lack of sophistication: it's the cheapest of our desktop replacement options by far – an upfront saving that is bound to find favour with your accountant.



> "It makes some concessions to after-hours use, but is designed mainly for getting the job done"

The Intel Core 2 Duo T5600 processor that runs the N100 is a solid workhorse; not blazing fast but with more than enough power for most business tasks.

Perhaps noting that we like to have a bit of fun on our work laptops, too, Lenovo has plumped for a dedicated graphics card, rather than the Intel graphics that most business notebooks go for.

The GeForce Go 7300, with just 128MB of RAM, is a relatively old graphics chip, but it will handle games and entertainment a little better than most. And while Vista's Business edition doesn't have as many graphical bells and whistles as the Home Premium or Ultimate editions, the extra grunt does allow the N100 to run basic Vista tasks with ease.

The main focus, however, is on work-related features. While other widescreen notebooks exploit their screens for entertainment, the N100's Lenovo Care software concentrates on biometric security, back-up and device management.

Compared to Lenovo's enteprise-level ThinkPad line, the N100 makes some concessions to after-hours use, but first and foremost this is laptop is designed for getting the job done.

You should also consider...

ACER TRAVELMATE 4202AWLMI

If you're reeling from some of the prices on these pages, it's time to take a calming look at the budget end of the market. Costing over two grand less than some of the models on show here, this Travelmate may only have Vista Home Basic, but there's an Intel Core 2 Duo chip, 15.4-inch widescreen display, wireless LAN and a decent 80GB hard drive. Maybe it won't turn people's heads, but it will surely please your wallet.

Price $1,299
Manufacturer Acer
Web www.acer.com.au

Our verdict

Buy it if... you want a no-nonsense business laptop with good inbuilt security measures.
Don't buy it if... you want something with stylish design or the ultimate in performance.

The bottom line

A well priced laptop that makes for a good workhorse.

★★★☆☆

Premium-priced performance

HP Pavilion dv9205tx $3,999

Windows Experience Index 4.5

Screen 17in WXGA+ (1440x900)
CPU Intel Core2 Duo T7200
Graphics NVIDIA GeForce Go 7600

"The practical upshot of all this sexy technology is that this is a great home entertainment PC"

We can find plenty of words to describe the dv9205tx, but three in particular seem to sum it up: huge, shiny and gorgeous. This really is a no-holds barred notebook, as reflected in its use of Vista's Ultimate edition and it's pointy-end of town price.

For four grand (less your bus fare home) you get a 17-inch widescreen with WXGA+ resolution and a dent in your shoulder from its 3.5kg weight.

The mass is justified by the specs, however. Inside you get a solid (but not quite top-of-the-range) chip, 2GB of RAM, a 512MB Nvidia GeForce Go 7600 graphics card and two 160GB hard drives. The dv9205tx also comes with a Lightscribe-capable DVD drive that laser-etches labels onto the surface of compatible DVDs and CDs when you burn the disc, which is a neat trick.

The practical upshot of all this sexy technology is that the dv9205tx is a great home entertainment PC. It even comes with a digital TV tuner and remote control, so you can fill up all that hard disk space with your favourite shows, as well as music, movies, photos and anything else that takes your fancy.

Integrated Altec Lansing speakers run across the entire width of the laptop, above the full-sized keyboard, and HP has thoughtfully added a second headphone socket, so you can share with a friend. Both are conveniently located on the front edge.

The jaw-dropping design must have added considerably to the overall price, but we think it's worth every cent. The shell has a hard gloss layer to protect from scratches, and is etched with zen-like waves. Glowing blue buttons allow you to control media playback without even booting up.

The WEI score of 4.5 reflects the quality of the Pavilion; there's only a range of 0.4 from the lowest score (for memory) to the highest. This is a fast, capable and desirable notebook – but with a sharp price to match.

You should also consider...

TOSHIBA QOSMIO G30

If high entertainment is the balsa for your boat, take a peek at the Qosmio. Designed as a dedicated Media Center, this has a stack of desirable features, such as tuck-away remote control, integrated TV tuner, dual hard drive, large widescreen and Nvidia graphics, plus a high definition HD DVD player. It's bulky, pricey and the battery life isn't up to much – but it's a beaut.

Price $5,499
Manufacturer Toshiba
Web www.toshiba.com.au

Our verdict

Buy it if... you want a desktop replacement with all the trimmings.
Don't buy it if... Portability and price are sensitive topics.

The bottom line

It's not cheap, but it's a quality product and scores big where it matters.

★★★★★

Cutting edge fashion
Toshiba Portégé R400 **$3,750**

Screen 12.1" WXGA (1280x800)
CPU Intel Core Duo ULV U2500
Graphics Intel 945GM Express

Weighing in at a smidgen over 1.7kg, Toshiba's R400 Tablet PC feels almost too light to be true. Pick it up and you could be mistaken for thinking it's a model, rather than a real notebook PC. In fact, with its eye-catching design and innovative second display – more on which later – it looks like something of a concept model.

Most business machines (the R400 ships with Vista's Business edition) tend toward pedestrian design, favouring rugged builds and security features over looks and style. The R400 wants it all, combining its shiny white case with features like biometric security and hard drive shock-protection.

> "Toshiba worked with Microsoft to create the R400 from the ground up with Vista in mind"

It's also the first Tablet PC on the market to sport a latchless lid, so you can flip quickly between typing on the keyboard and writing on screen using the special pen.

Toshiba worked closely with Microsoft to create the R400, building it from the ground up for Windows Vista. This makes for a number of subtle performance improvements and one more obvious new feature: the Edge display.

This is a strip along the side of the PC that uses low-power OLED screen technology to display useful information, even when the R400 is closed or in sleep mode. Using Microsoft Active Notifications, the Edge display can alert you to upcoming appointments and incoming emails in real time.

The one thing we did miss on the R400 was an integrated CD/DVD drive, which has been left off to keep the notebook slim. If you want an external model, you'll have to drop an extra $495.

Graphics performance drags down the R400's WEI score, which would otherwise have exceeded four, confirming this laptop's fine credentials. Look out for even more wow factor later in the year, when Toshiba will release a wireless port replicator and 3G connectivity.

You should also consider...

FUJITSU STYLISTIC P1610

This is one of the smallest and lightest Tablet PCs on the market but, like the Toshiba, it uses the convertible form factor, with a keyboard so it can be used like a normal notebook when you put the pen down. Powerful it's not, but the ultra-low voltage processor ensures up to 8 hours of battery life, and at less than 1kg, you can actually imaging holding it that long.

Price $3,299
Manufacturer Fujitsu
Web www.lifebook.com.au

Our verdict

Buy it if... you want to make the ultimate style statement or need a Tablet PC.
Don't buy it if... you want high-end graphics or need a built-in CD/DVD drive.

The bottom line

Sleek, innovative and ideal for the business user who wants to make an impression.

★★★★

T3

The world's No.1 gadget mag

THERE'S NOTHING PC ABOUT T3

Affordable and portable
MSI MegaBook S262 $1,899

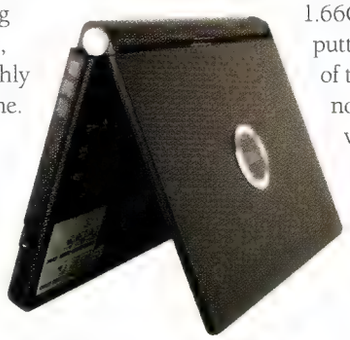
Windows Experience Index 3.0

Screen 12.1in WXGA (1280x800)
CPU Intel Core 2 Duo T5500
Graphics Intel 945GM Express

"It's the most affordable notebook in our roundup, but obviously you get what you pay for"

Who said that ultraportables had to be expensive? Clearly, nobody at MSI was listening. The MegaBook S262 just about scrapes into the category at the kind of price that you'd associate with a budget system.

Compared to the Toshiba Portégé R400 and Fujitsu Lifebook P7230, the MegaBook is on the chunky side, but it's all relative – like placing a normal human being next to a supermodel. With a 12.1-inch screen and a 2kg carrying weight, this is still a highly portable machine.



To keep the price low, however, MSI has had to cut a few corners. For a start, this is the only widescreen in our round-up that comes with the Home Basic edition of Vista. That means it lacks the networking features of the Business edition, and the fancier consumer features, such as Media Center and the Aero graphics, that the Home Premium and Ultimate editions include.

The S262 does sport an Intel Core 2 Duo processor, but it's just the 1.66GHz T5500 version, putting it at the lower end of the power scale. It's also not a low-voltage part, which means the battery life will struggle to match that of some other ultraportables in the market. A reduced size keyboard is to be expected on all ultraportables, but the trackpad on the S262 is also rather small, making it harder to operate without a mouse. The striking, but impractical, mouse buttons beneath it hardly help, not being as responsive as we'd have liked.

Obviously you get what you pay for with the MegaBook, which is the most affordable notebook in our roundup – even beating out the excellent value but far less portable Lenovo 3000 N100.

Ultimately, however, it's tough to wholeheartedly recommend it unless you simply must have a small laptop at a bargain price. There are much more compelling widescreen laptops out there for the same price, albeit less portable ones.

You should also consider...

DELL XPS M1210

No one ever got into trouble for buying Dell. The XPS range represents the latest technology in laptop form, and the 1210 is the ultra-mobile option. Its 12.1-inch screen makes for a small chassis that weighs just under the 2kg mark. Powered by the Intel Core 2 Duo processor, it will handle anything that you choose to throw at it.

Price $1,699
Manufacturer Dell
Web www.dell.com.au

Our verdict

Buy it if... you want an ultraportable widescreen at an entry-level price.
Don't buy it if... you want high-end performance, or all the features Vista can offer.

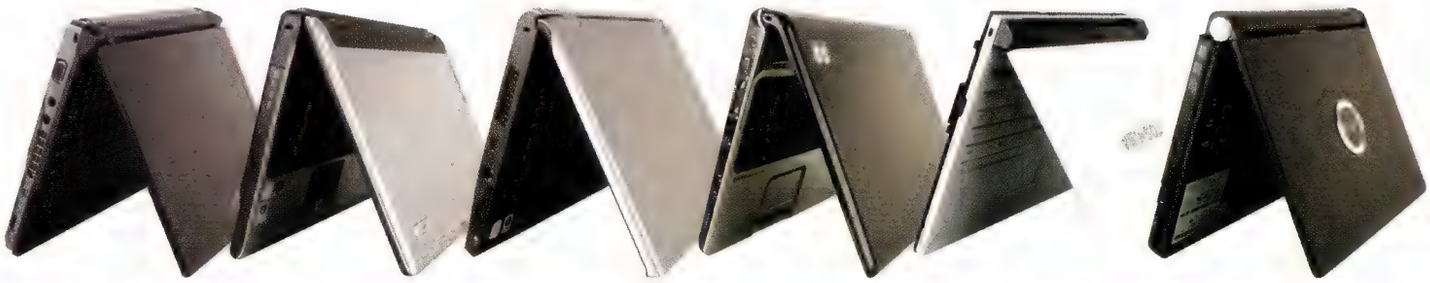
The bottom line

A good option if you value portability but don't want to break the bank.

★★★☆☆

Head to head, and at a glance

The specs, the whole specs and nothing but the specs



COMPANY	FUJITSU	ACER	LENOVO	HEWLETT PACKARD	TOSHIBA	MSI
MODEL	Lifebook P7230	Aspire AS9425WSMi	3000 N100	Pavilion dv9205tx	Portégé R400	MegaBook S262V
PRICE	$2,999	$2,699	$2,079	$3,999	$3,750	$1,899
WEB	www.lifebook.com.au	www.acer.com.au	www.lenovo.com.au	www.hp.com.au	www.toshiba.com.au	www.altech.com.au
SCREEN	12.1in WXGA (1280x768)	17in WXGA+ (1440x900)	15.4in WXGA (1280x800)	17in WXGA+ (1440x900)	12.1in WXGA (1280x800)	12.1in WXGA (1280x800)
PROCESSOR	Intel Core u1400	Intel Core 2 Duo T7200	Intel Core 2 Duo T5600	Intel Core2 Duo T7200	Intel Core Duo ULV U2500	Intel Core 2 Duo T5500
GRAPHICS	Intel 945GM Express	Nvidia GeForce Go 7300	Nvidia GeForce Go 7300	Nvidia GeForce Go 7600	Intel 945GM Express	Intel 945GM Express
MEMORY	1GB DDR2	2GB DDR2	1GB DDR2	2GB DDR2	2GB DDR2	1GB DDR2
HARD DRIVE	80GB	160GB	120GB	320GB (2 x 160 GB)	80GB	80GB
OPTICAL DRIVE	DL Super Multi	DL Super Multi	DL Super Multi	DL Super Multi Lightscribe	None	DL Super Multi
LAN	10/100/1000 Ethernet	10/100/1000 Ethernet	10/100 Ethernet	10/100/1000 Ethernet	10/100/1000 Ethernet	10/100/1000 Ethernet
WIRELESS	802.11a/b/g, Bluetooth	802.11a/b/g, Bluetooth	802.11a/b/g, Bluetooth	802.11a/b/g	802.11a/b/g, Bluetooth	802.11b/g, Bluetooth
I/O PORTS	1x PCI Express, 2x USB, 1x VGA, 1x Firewire, 1x SD/MS/xD slot, 1x Port Replicator interface	1x PC Card, 4x USB, 1x VGA, 1x SD/MS/xD slot), 1x S-Video, 1x SPDIF, 1x line-in audio	1x PC Card, 4x USB, 1x VGA, 1x Firewire, 1x SD/MS/xD slot, 1x S-Video out	1x PCI Express, 4x USB, 1x VGA, 1x Firewire, 1x SD/MS/xD slot, 1x SPDIF, 1x S-Video, 1x HDMI	1x PC Card, 2x USB, 1x VGA	1x PC card, 3x USB, 1x Firewire, 1x SD/MS slot, 1x SPDIF
WEBCAM	0.3 megapixels	1.3 megapixels	Yes	1.3 megapixels	No	No
VISTA EDITION	Business	Home Premium	Business	Ultimate	Business	Home Basic
SIZE (cm)	27 x 20 x 3.0	40 x 30 x 4.0	36 x 27 x 3.9	40 x 29 x 4.2	30 x 24 x 3.2	30 x 23 x 3.0
WEIGHT (kg)	1.3	3.7	2.8	3.5	1.7	2.0
W.E.INDEX	2.8	3.1	3.1	4.5	3.1	3.0
WARRANTY	2 years	1 year	1 year	1 year	3 years	1 year
SCORE	★★★★½	★★★½	★★★½	★★★★★	★★★★½	★★★½

So, which of these laptops should you buy?

Our test takes in a real cross-section of widescreen notebooks, which means there really is something here for everyone.

Line honours have to go to the HP Pavilion dv9205tx as a desktop replacement, with Toshiba's more portable Portégé R400 not far behind. It's hard not to fall in utter tech-lust with this stylish pair, both of which excel at what they're made for: entertainment in the case of the HP, productivity for the Toshiba.

That said, it's equally hard to scratch up the asking price for these objects of desire. When it comes to value, the Acer strikes us as a good-value alternative to the HP, offering a similar screen size and feature set without all the bells and whistles, while the Lenovo is a capable, affordable business machine.

On the ultraportable side, the Fujitsu Lifebook can't be beaten for size and weight – it can be cradled in one hand like a real book – while the MSI Megabook offers astonishing value.

Neither can quite match the Portégé R400's wow factor, however, which also eases itself ahead thanks to the integration of Tablet PC and its surprisingly useful Edge display.

A round-up of budget Windows Vista PCs next issue, on sale Wednesday 23 May

Which world would we choose to get lost in?

What's more entertaining – a nuclear wasteland or a demon-filled dungeon? To find out, we pit STALKER: Shadow of Chernobyl and The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion against each other. **By Jon Hicks**

Emergent. Immersive. Free-form. For developers, they're increasingly popular buzzwords. They're all to do with games that aren't happy with just being games, but rather offer their best impression of an actual world; a place you visit. 'Emergent' describes games that have so many pieces modelled that they can interact to create the unexpected every time you play. 'Immersive' describes how easy it is to get lost in the game, almost to the point you forget you're playing a game. And 'free-form' is a game that shuns traditional levels, preferring to let you just wander off and do your own thing.

Oblivion was last year's king of the type, putting you in the hobnailed boots of a fantasy adventurer. You can play any fantasy-hero type – wizards, warriors, whatever – and are given an enormous world of dungeons and quaint medieval towns to explore. And, naturally enough, this enormous world is in peril, with rifts to the demon-realm of Oblivion opening up for you to seal.

This year's contender in the world of first-person immersion is STALKER, and a completely different animal. In the near future, the land near Chernobyl – that is, the ruins of Chernobyl power station in the real world – has started to act increasingly unusually. Along with the destructive anomalies, a symptom of this strangeness are valuable artefacts which litter the landscape. Enter the Stalkers, trying to survive as best as they can in a world gone completely mad.

In terms of being free-form, Oblivion's the clear winner. After you exit the initial training dungeon, you're literally free to go wherever you like. Sure, there's the small matter of saving the world, but that can wait. Turn, face a

KEY DETAILS
Price: $89.95
Release date: Out now
Minimum specs: P4 2GHz, 1GB RAM, GeForce 5700 or Radeon 9600 graphics card
Recommended specs: Intel Core2 Duo E6400 or AMD Athlon 64 X2 42000, 2GB RAM, GeForce 7900 or Radeon X1950 graphics card
Multiplayer: 2 to 8 players

STALKER: Shadow of Chernobyl
Price $89.95
Web www.stalker-game.com

direction and walk – you'll find a city or a dungeon or some band or *something*. Conversely, STALKER's world only opens up when you follow the main story. When you've unlocked the regions you can go back and forth doing whatever you like, but you have to follow some of the story.

Equally, in terms of what you do, there's a lot less leeway in STALKER. In Oblivion you can make any fantasy hero (or villain) you wish by developing your character in such a way that they become a master wizard, fiendish thief or anything else. In STALKER you're a Stalker. Your character is personalised by the weapons you choose to carry and by equipping a few of the artefacts you find, which give minimal boosts. You shoot. You sneak. While aspects such as choosing which political factions in the world you want to team up with are welcome, Oblivion has the same, but more so.

Things are more equal on the terms of emergence. While the vast array of things happening in Oblivion can lead to the unexpected, especially if you've chosen an unusual power setup, the world's relatively static. Not so in STALKER, whose various bandits, mutant dogs and Stalkers are at each other throats. If you're passing a base which happens to be under attack at that moment, a mission generates that rewards you if you help. You can even be hired to wipe out something, then get the reward when another inhabitant of the Zone does it for you.

Immersion cuts both ways. Due to simply being so much bigger and varied than its Ukrainian rival, Oblivion is a place where you can lose yourself for dozens – or even hundreds – of hours. It's easy to make a second life there, including acts such as buying property. But STALKER manages its own immersion not by scale, but detail. The radioactive, mutant-strewn hell-hole of the Zone is a lovingly created place, and full of unique, memorable, horrific incidents.

The strength of Oblivion is that it creates the fantasy world which people have dreamt of visiting, and lets you holiday there for as long as you want. It's a sweet escape for gamers who don't have the time for a real holiday. And it costs far less as well! The strength of STALKER is that it creates a fantasy world you'd have never, ever thought of visiting, so everything's a (often monstrous) surprise.

KEY DETAILS

Price: $49.95
Release date: Out now
Minimum specs: P4 2GHz, 512MB RAM, 128Mb Direct3D graphics card
Recommended specs: P4 3GHz, 1GB RAM, ATI X800 or GeForce 6800 graphics card
Multiplayer: No

Our verdict

STALKER: Shadow of Chernobyl
Buy it if... you like shooting, horror and something a little different from the usual videogame.
Don't buy it if... you're looking for an enormous world packed with plentiful options. Also avoid if you can't stand a few rough edges.

The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion
Buy it if... you simply want to be a heroic fantasy adventurer in a world of treasure, maidens, and monsters.
Don't buy it if... clichés turn your stomach and you want something that's a little more action packed.

THE BOTTOM LINE

STALKER and Oblivion are very different games. The latter's far more polished and bigger, while STALKER is a neat first-person shooter with lots of atmosphere; tired of usual shooters, it's a good choice. If you want a real fantasy holiday, choose Oblivion.

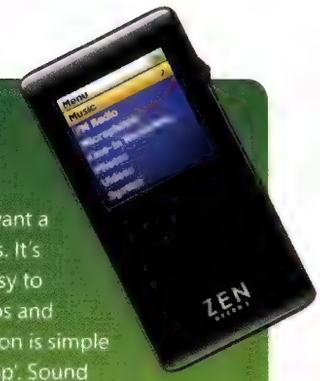
The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion
Price $49.95
Web www.elderscrolls.com

MP3 players

There are thousands of MP3 players available in all shapes and sizes. No matter why you want one, whether it's for jogging or just to store all your music and videos, one of these will have you covered.

By Damian Francis

CREATIVE ZEN NEEON 2
$140 (1GB)



The Creative Zen Neeon 2 is for people who want a tiny MP3 player that doesn't skimp on features. It's available in 1GB, 2GB and 4GB sizes, has an easy to read 1.5-inch colour screen, plays music, videos and radio, and stores your photos as well. Installation is simple and adding content is as easy as 'drag and drop'. Sound quality is acceptable with the provided earphones, but the scroller button's inaccuracy can become annoying. The 20-hour battery life is more than enough to keep you entertained.

www.au.creative.com

★★★★☆

TOSHIBA GIGABEAT PORTABLE MEDIA CENTRE
$410 (60GB)

The Grand Daddy of MP3 players for people using Windows Media Player. Everything about it shouts style, from the brushed aluminium back to the easy-to-use Windows Mobile interface that syncs effortlessly with Windows Media Player. If you're not content watching videos on the sharp 2.4-inch screen, you can hook it up to your TV. It comes in 30GB or 60GB versions and in a choice of black or white. Sound quality is stunning.

www.toshiba.com.au

★★★★★

SAMSUNG YP-F2
$209 (1GB)

You want a tiny MP3 player. The tiniest MP3 player possible. You only want to be able to see it through a microscope! Don't be ridiculous, try the YP-F2 instead. It has all the basic functions of a good MP3 player, a bright and easy to read screen, and will still fit in the coin pocket of your jeans. The 1GB capacity will store plenty of music and there's an FM radio tuner as well. Although the 12-hour battery life is sufficient, most competitors of this size last longer.

www.samsung.com.au

★★★★☆

SONY NW-E003F
$159 (1GB)

It looks great, comes in a range of colours, has fantastic battery life, fits anywhere, and has good sound quality. It's a real shame that Sony made it so difficult to actually put music on the NW-E003F. Forget 'drag and drop', that's not possible. Enter Sonic Stage, which didn't work at first installation and had to be re-installed. When it finally did open, it was a slow and difficult piece of software to use. Sadly, the player's 1GB capacity means you'll be using Sonic Stage a lot.

www.sony.com.au

★★★☆☆

SANDISK SANSA C250
$149 (2GB)

Weighing in somewhere between the Sony and the Creative in size, the Sansa c250 is a great all-round player. It plays MP3, WMA and WAV files, as well as tune into FM radio. It can record the radio and your voice, too. The colour screen is easy to read and will display the cover art of your albums. The next model along also does magic tricks... well, not quite. Close to a magic trick in this model though, is the expandable memory. If the generous 2GB isn't enough, just slot in a microSD card and pack more content on.

www.sandisk.com

★★★★★

Reader's verdict
Digital Cameras

Still snapping fuzzy two-megapixel shots? Time to upgrade to one of these powerful compacts... By James De Vile

Becky Holt
Age: 33
Our mission: Find a compact digital camera up to the task of taking quality photos at her brother's wedding.

Becky came to us for help; her brother is getting married in August, and her ageing Casio digital camera was playing up. With a dwindling battery life, faded screen and an increasingly hard-to-find memory card format, it was clear why Becky felt it wasn't up to the job. The wedding was a perfect excuse to upgrade, but she didn't feel confident enough with her camera jargon to make a decision on a new model simply by comparing technical specifications online. Determined to get her to the church on time, we picked out a selection of current models

and gave her as much hands-on time as she needed.

We wanted the test to be as realistic as possible, so we set up outside a beautiful church, a perfect backdrop for a wedding photo shoot. We couldn't find any bridesmaids (though Nick Odantzis eagerly volunteered), but the building's intricate carved angels and flying buttresses made excellent subjects in assessing the detail picked up by each camera's optical sensor.

In testing each camera, Becky looked at the build quality, start-up time, interface, input method and picture quality. All the models were seven-megapixel digital compacts, touted as being ideal for slipping into a handbag or jacket pocket. Prices for digital cameras with a decent megapixel count have come down a lot recently, and three of these models can be found for under $500.

SONY CYBERSHOT DSC-T50

Price $467 (from www.ccelectronics.com.au)
Web www.sony.com.au

The Sony's power button proved difficult to turn on, and it took a while before Becky discovered that the slide cover acted as an enormous secondary power switch. Once it was switched on, the camera was ready within half a second, impressing Becky. "With my old camera I had to wait forever – this is better for spur of the moment shots," she enthused. Before snapping, Becky took a look at the interface; the Sony uses a touch-panel and, after a few moments of prodding, Becky got the hang of selecting options. She struggled to identify what all the icons meant; though well laid out, the lack of labels meant she had to go through to find out what each one did.

The screen remained clear, even when in direct sunlight – an important consideration. "I need to see what I'm taking, otherwise I'll end up chopping off my mother's head!" Becky mused. The live histogram was a nice addition, allowing her to balance the light and colour of a shot. Becky was slightly frustrated by the speed of the zoom, which tended to crawl sluggishly in both directions. She found the Sony had a good range of focus options, but despite this it still struggled, even in macro mode, to focus on the coffee cup in front of her.

The biggest blow was over image quality – Becky's face dropped when she saw her photo on the laptop screen. "These shots look totally

TOUCH TECH The CyberShot boasts a touch-panel screen – very high tech, once you've got the hang of it

QUICK AS A FLASH Turns out that the Sony's slide cover acts as an on/off switch and, once on, the camera's ready to go in an instant

"This Sony Cybershot is better for spur of the moment shots"

NIKON COOLPIX S7C

Price $488
(from www.apeshop.com.au)
Web www.nikon.com.au

Again, Becky struggled with the power button, which was an odd shape on the Nikon. The shutter button presented similar problems – it wasn't raised, and Becky wasn't a fan of the rectangular button shape.

Becky noted that the screen didn't seem as high quality as the Sony; she also grimaced at the 'ugly' low-resolution menu and found the yellow and grey colour scheme difficult to look at.

The menu itself was inconsistent; in some options, the OK button was used to accept choices, in others the Menu button was required. Becky appreciated the use of plain English on the labels, such as Close-Up rather than Macro.

Becky continued to explore the menus, impressed with the flexibility of the camera. Film ISO speed could be set from 50 to 1,600; according to Becky this would "allow a few sneaky shots during the ceremony without a flash… and with the built-in voice recorder I could record the big 'I do' moment!"

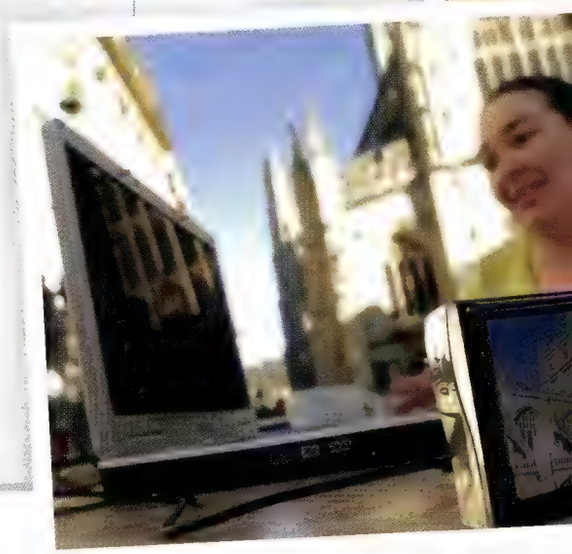
"With the voice recorder I could record the big 'I do' moment"

The Nikon's zoom was faster than the Sony, though the tiny button was difficult to use. The auto focus was excellent, easily focusing on a coffee cup. The camera also features face tracking technology, which will give sharper shots of the wedding guests. When it came to taking photos, the Nikon excelled; white balance was perfect, and images were punchy and sharp with lots of saturation and little noise, thanks to the low speed settings. It was hard to fault the image quality.

Becky couldn't work out why a camera would need Wi-Fi. "Surely Bluetooth would be better?" she queried. "Still, it's a useful feature if you want to transfer shots to a laptop."

Becky's bottom line? "This camera takes great pictures – I'm stunned at the detail – but the menu layout and tiny buttons mean it isn't for me."

Verdict: "Takes great shots, if you can navigate that far."



FIELD TEST

characterless; the images have no contrast. I'd have to edit them in Windows Photo Gallery before they looked as good as I hoped," she sighed. "The Sony's well designed and I love the touch-screen interface – but I'm disappointed by the poor quality pictures."
Verdict: "Great interface; let down by poor shots".

WHAT A PICTURE The Nikon takes clear, well balanced pictures

WHY WI-FI? The Nikon boasts Wi-Fi technology for downloading to a laptop but Becky felt Bluetooth would have been more suitable

SAMSUNG NV3

Price $489
(from www.exeltek.com.au)
Web www.samsung.com.au

Becky was immediately impressed with the style of the Samsung. "It's heavy, but this is not a negative point; the weight means that it's less likely to shake in my hands," she stated appreciatively. Becky was a little confused by the metal circles on top of the camera – these look just like buttons, but are for appearance only.

Becky turned the NV3 on with ease, as the accessible power button protruded obviously from an indented bevel, surrounded by an attractive blue light. "The interface is very Windows Vista-esque; the curves and transparency look great. Samsung has really gone to town on the interface, and it makes all the difference." She got a little lost in the endless scrolls of menus, trawling through with many a confused look, though she welcomed so many options to fiddle with.

Becky then discovered the portable media player (PMP) function, which really surprised her. "Why would you need an iPod when you can watch films on your camera!" she exclaimed, until we reminded her that she'd need to invest in a bigger memory card if she wanted to do that as well as take photographs.

We were inclined to agree with her that it would be great for listening to music on the train journey to the wedding, although as Becky pointed out, a standard mini-jack would have been a better choice than the micro-jack, and the battery power was better off spent taking lots of wedding pictures.

ON THE BIG SCREEN No squinting eyes with the Samsung; the large, clear screen is easy to view

"This zoom control's a bit odd," she grumbled. "Most people expect a zoom switch to move left and right, but this goes up and down." Despite this, the zoom function worked quickly and the focus was superb, locking on instantly from any distance. This facility really paid off; when we viewed the shots on our laptop, Becky was impressed at the quality – the shots were sharp and held strong colours, with shadow detail well represented.

> "Why would you need an iPod when you can watch films on your camera!"

"The Samsung is great!" Becky grinned. "I don't feel threatened by its usability, unlike the more complex Nikon, and for such a compact camera, I'm amazed at how big the screen is. Best of all, at such a low price I can buy a big memory card and watch movies on it too!" It took a few minutes, but we managed to prise the NV3 out of Becky's grasp ready for the final camera on test.
Verdict: "Small, sleek and packed with features."

CLOSE-UP It took Becky a while to get used to the zoom but once she did it worked superbly

AIM, FIRE The Samsung NV3 really is a sharp shooter; Becky found this easy to use and loved the media player facility

FIELD TEST

SHRINK TO FIT The Ixus I7 is petite, but so is the screen. Unlike the charging cradle that comes with it...

CANON IXUS I7 DENIM BLUE

Price: $359
(from www.pc.net.au)
Web: www.canon.com.au

"This camera is beautifully small, and I love the aluminium and blue design!" Becky proclaimed. "I could easily carry this in my pocket or handbag for the wedding. The only issue I have with the size is that the screen is tiny, too – with a screen this size I could do with a separate viewfinder."

Despite this being the only camera on test with a protruding lens, it managed to wow Becky with its fast start-up speed. The shutter button was well placed and fingertip sized.

The camera's menu provided Becky with plenty of menu options, laid out very clearly in a tabbed format. She struggled to find the zoom, looking for a dedicated rocker button, eventually discovering that the main joy pad was used to zoom in and out as well as perform any other directional functions. Despite the extending lens barrel, the zoom was the fastest out of all the cameras on test, though auto-focus struggled slightly to get a sharp shot of her coffee cup.

> "I could easily carry this in my pocket or handbag"

The superimposed display was Becky's favourite feature, clearly showing what the different modes and options were doing to the image. She particularly liked the Vivid mode, as this added clarity and colour to her photos. In places, though, the Canon had a tendency to over-expose pictures or add what Becky referred to as a 'glow' to her shots, which had a detrimental effect on detail.

Becky's main issue was with the cradle, which is required in order to charge or download images from the camera. "Carrying around a charging cable is enough, without having to pack a cradle too," she complained. "Overall, first impressions were very good, and it's the perfect size, but after looking at some of the shots and thinking about the practicalities of carrying the charger with me, it's not quite as portable as it first seemed to be."

Verdict: "Tiny camera, but the cradle means it's not as portable as it should be."

And our reader's final verdict is...

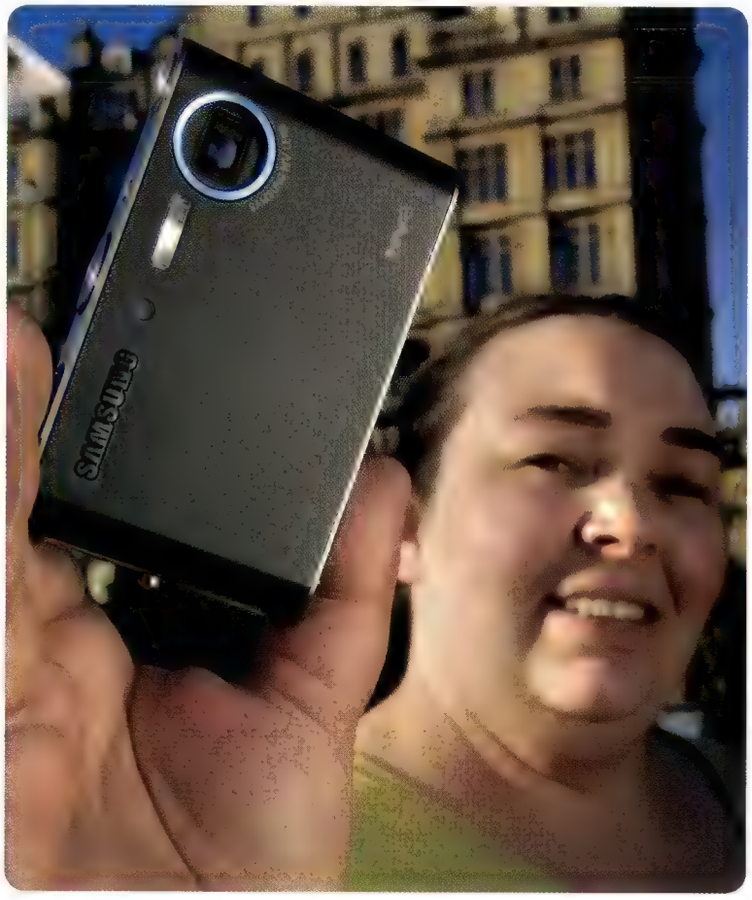
SAMSUNG NV3

For picture quality, Becky felt the Nikon came out on top. "I love the sharpness and the colour representation," she remarked. "Unfortunately, I can't get used to the interface – it's all there, but the jog-dial and clunky menu system mean that I can't pull this camera out and start snapping."

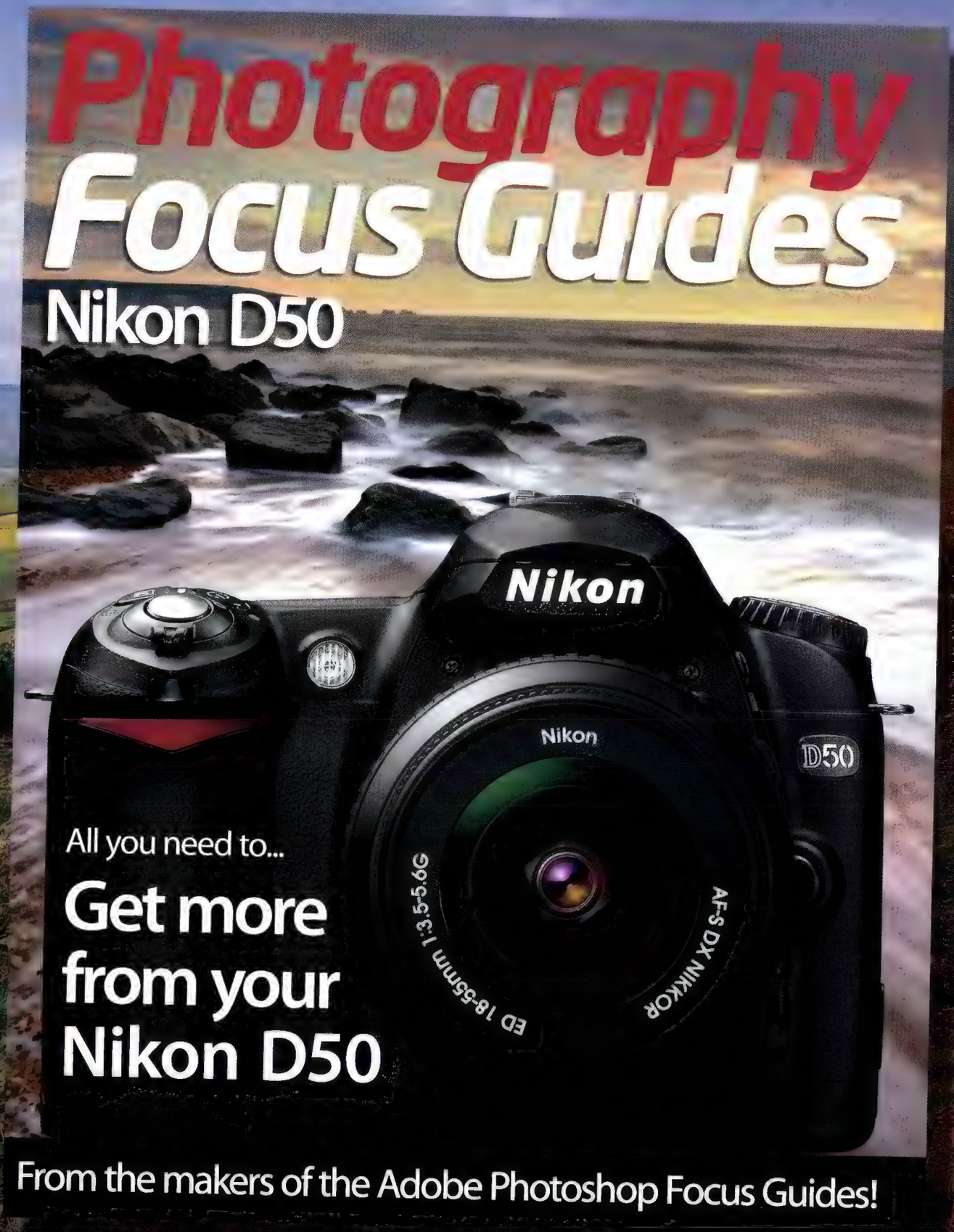
"The Sony's the complete opposite – the touch-panel is really easy to use (once used to it), and every option feels within easy reach. The menu looks great, and there are only a few odd icons to get my head round. If only the picture quality was better; out of the four, this is by far the worst, and despite the fancy features it's the photos that count for me."

The Canon was similarly close, but ultimately flawed in Becky's opinion due to the problems with over-exposure and the necessity for the charging cradle. It did, however, come a close second. "The Canon looks fantastic; it's smaller than my mobile phone, and I never notice that in my pocket. It's such a shame that the image quality isn't up to scratch."

Becky was adamant in her final decision. "The only digital compact here I'd be happy to hand over the money for is the Samsung. It's sleek and stylish, yet packed with features. It's only slightly bigger than the Canon, yet Samsung has fitted in a much larger screen, and portable media player functionality. Most importantly, it takes great shots. I love the interface, and the focus speed. I'm going to have to get used to the up-down rocker for the zoom control, but everything else is so intuitive that it's not enough to sway my decision. I love the stylish design, and can't wait to pull this from my handbag on the wedding day."



130 pages of expert photographic advice, plus a CD packed with must-have software!



ON SALE NOW!

The ultimate photography guides for everyone

In the long term

The real test of any new hardware is to live with it for a while. This is when you find out what the battery life is really like, or if the remote control falls apart after a week. Which is where our long-term tests come in: our reviewers will live with these devices, and report back on their progress here. Find out what's happened so far...

TRICKY Getting video on to your PC is not intuitive with the Canon HV10

Move video to your PC the hard way

Product Canon HV10
Price $2,299
Web www.canon.com.au
On test with Stuart Anderton

MONTH 2

This month I took the plunge and connected the Canon HV10 to my PC. Having used a 'normal' SD camcorder with Windows Vista, I was hoping the process would be just as simple; sadly it wasn't quite. When you connect a standard camcorder to Windows Vista it automatically pulls up a wizard, which walks you through the process of importing the video – that doesn't happen with the HV10. Fortunately, if you open Windows Movie Maker you can select Import Media and it recognises the HV10, although the only option available is to import the whole tape; the options you get with standard definition of selecting particular scenes or a timed area of the tape are not available. That could be a major pain if you have several things on one tape and only want to import one.

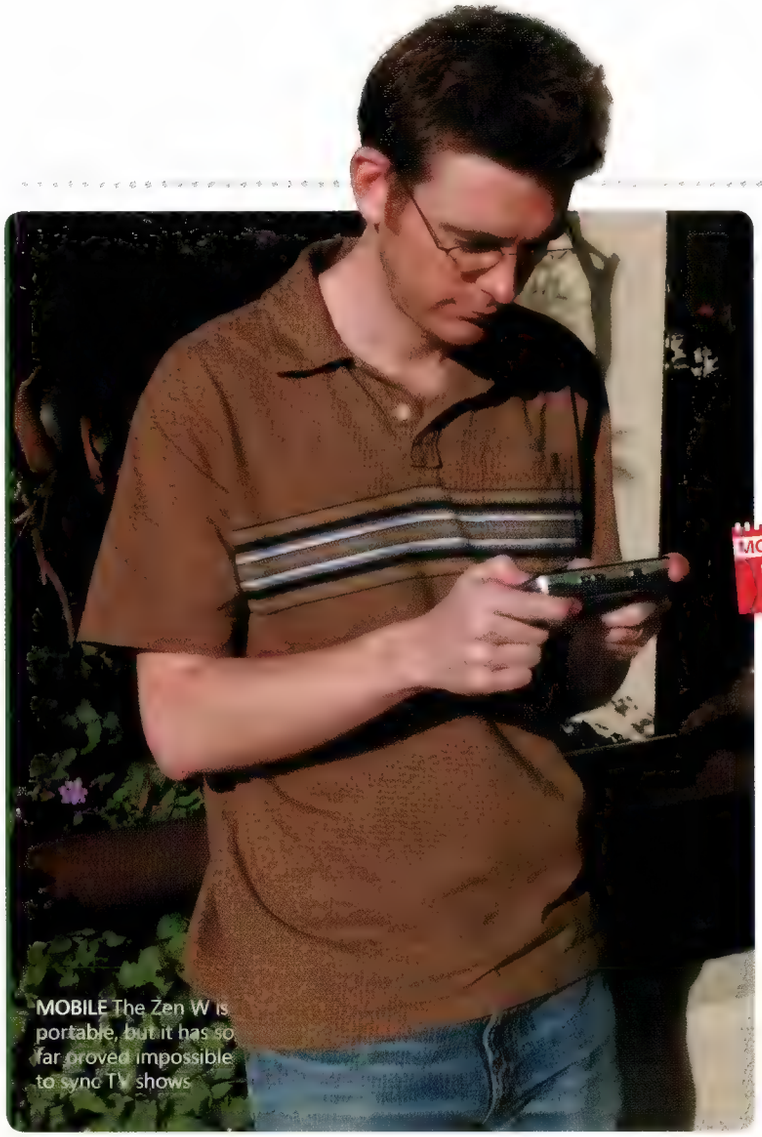
Anyway, once the importing is done, Windows Movie Maker handles the HD video fine, with its features, such as automatc clip creation, working well. Next issue I'll let you know how I got on getting the edited video out of Windows Vista.

I like Picture quality, show off blue glowing logo

I don't like Importing video isn't as smooth as standard definition

Any problems this month? Figuring out how to import video on to PC editing software

Got any of these gadgets? Share your stories – email us on: feedback@vistamag.com.au



MOBILE The Zen W is portable, but it has so far proved impossible to sync TV shows

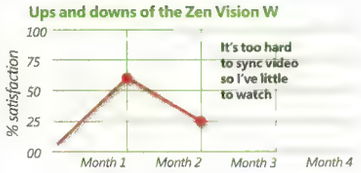
Watch videos at home and on the move

Product Creative Zen Vision W
Price $549
Web au.creative.com
On test with Stuart Whitmore

MONTH 2

After I filled the Zen W with random files last month, it swiftly made its way to the back of a drawer. Compared to the smooth way Apple's iPod and iTunes software interface, synchronising the Zen with my PC seemed too much trouble. Creative's own software stopped working, and while I could sync using Windows Media Center, it refused to copy over recorded TV.

Without my favourite free-to-air shows, I was stuck for anything to watch – left with a choice of endless home movies, or breaking the law and downloading films and TV episodes from the net using software such as BitTorrent. I'm going on holiday next month and the Zen would make a perfect travel companion. We'll see how long I can resist a life of crime.



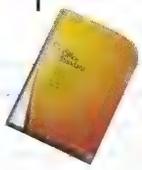
I like Using the AV out to watch video on a TV

I don't like Not being able to watch TV shows I've recorded on my PC

Any problems this month? Sync issues

New office suite: help or hindrance?

Product Microsoft Office Home and Student 2007
Price $249
Web office.microsoft.com
On test with Anna Walker, reader



MONTH 1

The most obvious thing with Office 2007 is the makeover – it looks completely different. The menus are a series of tabs across the top, which relate to the toolbar; selecting a different tab changes the options available to you in the toolbar. This is good, but I'm so used to where everything I need is it's taking me longer to do things. The toolbar seems over-crowded and I can't find the things I want.

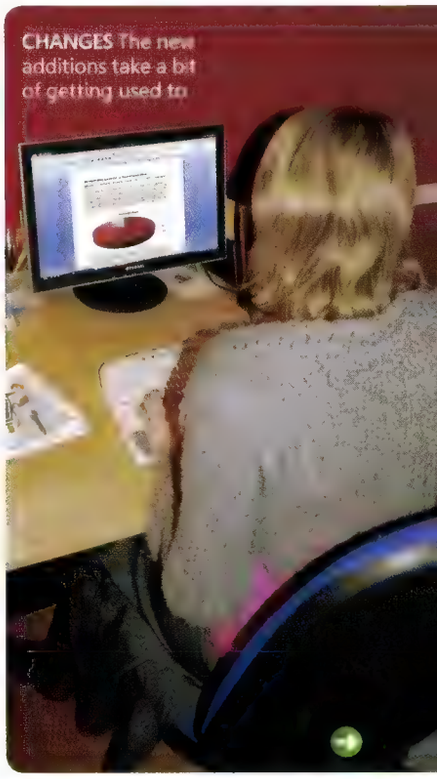
However, after spending some time getting used to it, I will grudgingly admit it's a change for the better. Everything has an icon, which means you don't have to trawl about looking for something new because the picture makes it more obvious.

Another clever addition is that when text is highlighted as you scroll through the different fonts, it previews what it would look like. This has been really handy for me as I can see how altering things will affect the page before I make the change, realise it looks rubbish and have to review it all over again. One niggle though: why doesn't it preview what it would look like if I made something bold or italic?

I like The new way of doing things

I don't like Getting used to the new way of doing things

Any problems this month? After using the old Microsoft Word for so long, it was frustrating having to get used to a new style



CHANGES The new additions take a bit of getting used to

Join our test panel – email us on: feedback@vistamag.com.au

Wireless music

Product Logitech Wireless Music System for PC
Price $250
Web www.logitech.com
On test with Damian Francis

MONTH 1

The horror stories I have heard about wireless music systems didn't fill me with confidence: they're too hard to set up; the sound quality is awful; there are so many wires that it defeats the purpose.

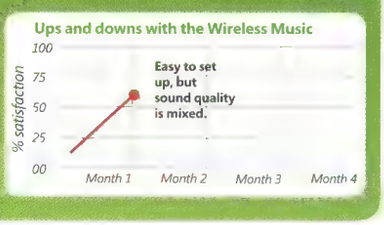
I opened the box cautiously, but to my surprise was up and running in minutes, streaming music to my living room sound system. Connect the USB antenna to your PC and the base station to your sound system and presto, a library of music as if from nowhere. There are wires, but not many.

And the audio quality? Using my $5,000 sound system in the living room was a pleasure. But streaming to my $500 bedroom system was painful, producing heavy, muffled, music.

I like Ease of setup

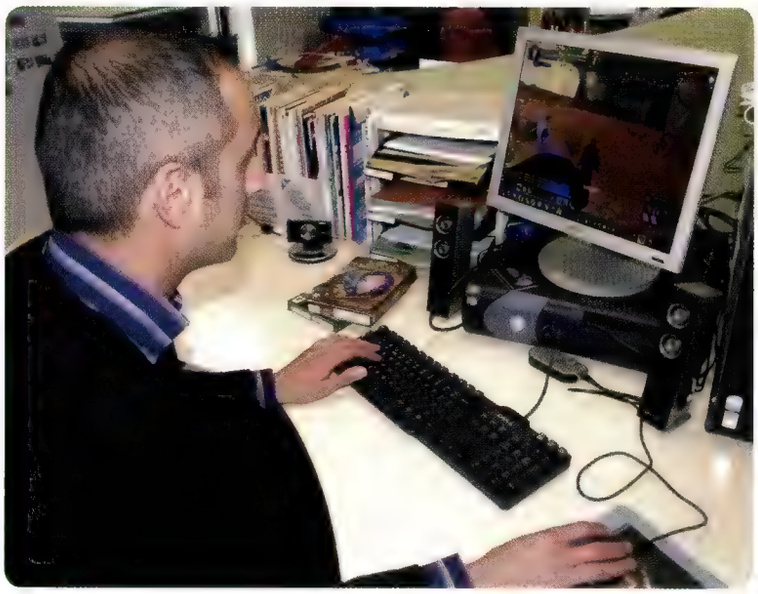
I don't like Sound quality could be better

Any problems this month? Aside from sound quality, no.



Just one more quest

Product World of Warcraft
Price $29.95
Web www.worldofwarcraft.com
On test with Paul Douglas



MONTH 1

When I said I'd start playing World of Warcraft, I was apprehensive. I'd heard stories about people who went home to play it for an hour and then emerged three months later, with a foot-long beard and a P45 on the doormat.

Would I succumb to a similar fate? I doubted it: the games I usually play are first-person shooters. The whole slaying-orcs-and-dragons thing has never really appealed. But eight million people have found something of interest in World of Warcraft, so it's time I found out what it was.

When the game arrived, I took to the tedious task of installing the game (five discs for World of Warcraft, and another four for the expansion pack, Burning Crusade). I was keen to get playing but I also had to download a bunch of patches to bring me up-to-date. This should have been simple but one of the patches wouldn't install and so, with a bit of help, I located the patch on the web, downloaded it and double-clicked it to install it. Once done, I was ready to start.

Easy to learn

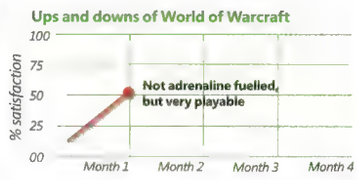
The first thing that struck me is that the learning curve for World of Warcraft is surprisingly easy. Movement is with the same keys used in most first-person shooters and the menu bar at the bottom of the screen has helpful tips when you hover over each icon. If you get stuck, asking another player in the game usually results in an answer.

The game takes the form of quests – characters give you a task, such as "go to the farm and kill bob", so you consult the map, walk to the destination, kill your target and return to claim your reward, which could be money, food, a weapon or other items.

Each quest completed, and each opponent slain, gives you experience points, and as you amass these your character rises through the levels. And that's what gives World of Warcraft its "just five more minutes" playing factor. It's so easy to say "I'll just play until I advance one more level", that what was supposed to be a quick 30 minutes' play suddenly turns into hours.

There are things I don't like about the game, though: the quests can be a tedious series of mouse-clicks, and getting around the huge virtual world requires a lot of walking, but even when I think I'm getting bored I still want to play just a little bit longer. The first few days I played just an hour a day – today, I played between 10am and 3pm. Five hours isn't much, though, is it? Don't answer that – I've got to go. I have a quest to complete.

> "What was supposed to be 30 minutes' play suddenly becomes hours"

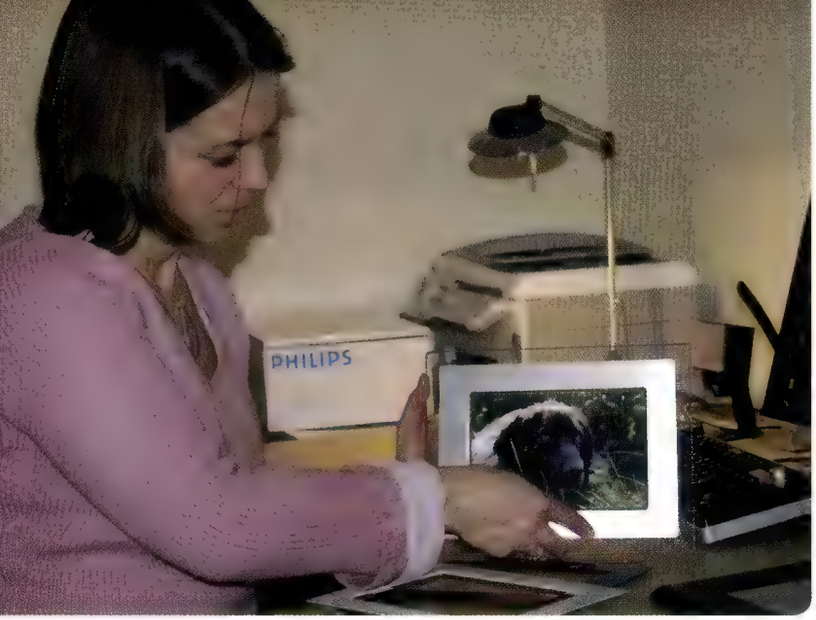


I like Easy to learn, other players generally friendly and helpful

I don't like Some quests are tedious, lots of walking

Any problems this month? One patch wouldn't automatically install so I had to download it manually

Got any of these gadgets? Share your stories – email us on: feedback@vistamag.com.au



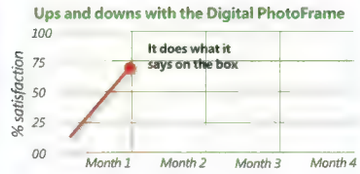
Electronic photo frame

Product Philips 9-inch Digital PhotoFrame (9FF2M4)
Price $450
Web www.philips.com.au
On test with Tina Pluchino, communications executive

MONTH 1

While I write, I'm being distracted as memories from past holidays spring to life in my peripheral vision. It may seem an extravagant use of electricity but the PhotoFrame's rechargeable battery enables you to do so without cabling. With a viewing area of 137x91mm, it's table-top size, but wall mounting brackets are supplied. While there's a choice of picture transition and cropping features, it's just full-frame and straightforward fading for me.

Copying photos from PC to PhotoFrame couldn't be easier: it's a matter of plugging in the USB cable and dragging images into folders; very quick, too. The frustrations I experienced at set-up stemmed mainly from my impatience. I'll keep you informed on its progress.



I like Easy to use, good for displaying photos you might not print

I don't like Some of the frame choices aren't very nice

Any problems this month? Concerns about the electricity!

One more for the road

Product Belkin TuneCast 3
Price $85
Web www.belkin.com.au
On test with Damian Francis

MONTH 1

I don't drive to work, my car already has a six-stacker CD player in it, and I like to do things as quickly and painlessly as possible.

All this makes it very hard for the TuneCast to impress me. Why? Because I am used to just jumping in my car and driving away to the sounds of my CD player, no fuss, no hassle.

Now I have to remember to bring my MP3 player that is usually in my work bag. I also have to remember to have a spare battery on hand for the TuneCast.

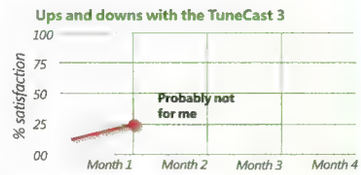
Once in the car, I have to plug it all in and find a place for it. My next dilemma was that the MP3 player was hard to reach and change playlists. I would have to buy a car holder for it.

Getting the TuneCast to work is a breeze, and the sound quality is pretty good, but it's just so much easier to use your car CD player, especially if it's MP3 compatible. Perhaps someone without the luxury of a CD changer in their car will appreciate it more than I.

I like Simple to use

I don't like The hassle of plugging everthing in, changing playlists, making sure everything is charged

Any problems this month?
It does exactly what it says it will do. it doesn't say it will be easier than using your car CD player



Also out on test

Product: i-mate JAMin
On test with: Jeremy Laird

Life with this phone is a daily pleasure. Web browsing, email or instant messaging – the JAMin does it all. The range of software for the Windows Mobile platform is so vast, I'll do well to scratch the surface. It's less able to cope with high-quality video, however, so irritatingly I may need another device.

Product Pinnacle PCTV 330E
On test with Stuart Whitmore

After an initial flurry of excitement to be recording TV on my PC, I simply stopped using the PCTV 330E for two very practical reasons: I have a hard disk video recorder beneath my TV, and very little spare disk space on my PC. I'm getting a new external disk and subscribing to an online program guide this month, so we'll see if that changes my viewing habits.

Product Canon Ixus 99Ti
On test with Richard Keith

The pictures from the Canon Ixus continue to impress me, but the tiny memory card, which only holds around six photos, is holding me back. I think it's time to invest in a bigger one.

Join our test panel – email us on: feedback@vistamag.com.au

Get a home for your web site

Paid-for hosting enables you to make a web site which looks great and attracts loads of visitors. We show you what to look for and how to get the best from your host. **By James Stables**

Buying and owning web space is a bit like having an allotment – a tiny piece of land owned by someone else which is yours to cultivate as you wish. There are thousands of hosts (land owners, to continue the analogy) out there vying for your money; you have to choose one which will enable your online allotment to flourish and grow.

OK, enough of the horticultural references. While there is plenty of free hosting out there, the main disadvantage is that you will have access to fewer tools. Another drawback is that your web site address will feature the name of the host (eg, mydomain.myhost.com) and thereby detract from your autonomy.

While most paid-for providers may look the same on the surface, there are subtle differences worth considering. The first is how much space you are allocated for storing all the content and pictures on your site. The second is the number of visitors (known as traffic) allowed on to your site per month.

While there are some very cheap deals around, buying below your needs will only restrict the growth and reach of your site. Someone starting a web site should look to have around 500MB of storage space and at least 5GB of traffic allowance.

> "Large web hosts can also offer features like royalty-free stock photos"

This would be plenty of space for a basic user, but anything much less than this and one appearance on a community web site, such as digg.com, will bring your site to its knees.

When it comes to registering a domain name, choose one which is easily memorable and can be found easily. If you opt for a .au domain, check that your chosen provider is registered with auDA, the Australian self-regulatory body in charge of hosting.

Paul Nicholson, sales account manager of Netcetera, highlights a potential pitfall when buying hosting:

"Ask a host whose name the domain is actually registered in," he advises. "Some people think it's in their name, but actually it's in the name of the company. This means that, if a customer wants to switch host, they will lose their domain."

Deciding factors

Neil Hodson, general manager of 1&1 Internet Ltd, outlines other factors that should influence your choice.

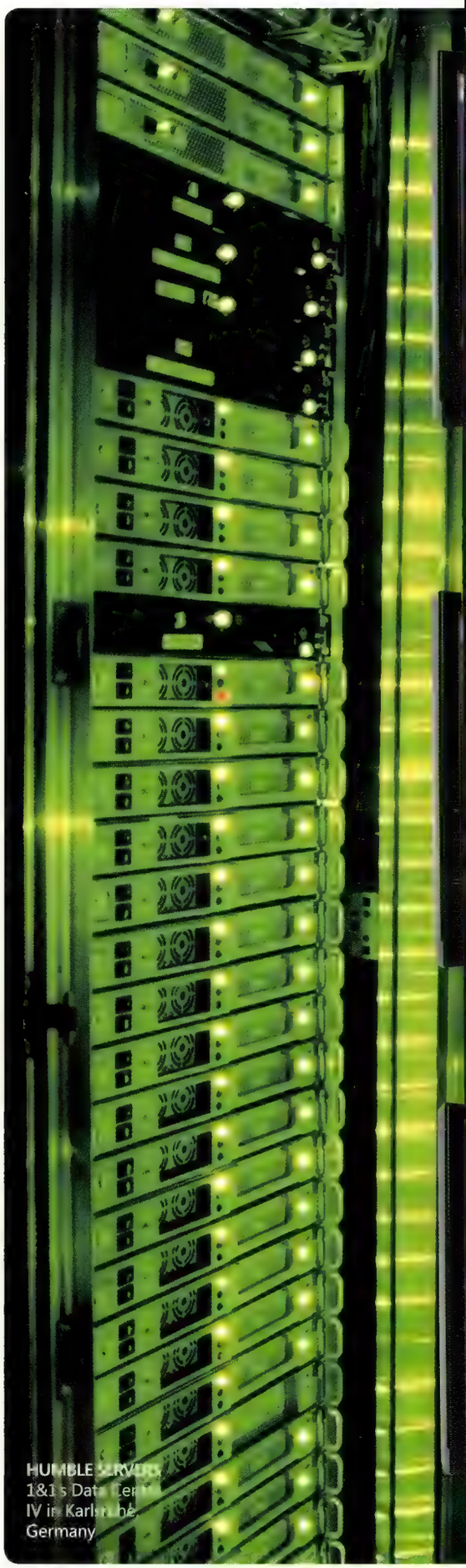
"You should look at a web host's uptime guarantee, their connectivity speed, their data centre, experience in hosting and financial stability," he says.

"Look for a provider that offers a 99.9 per cent service promise and a trial period in case you change your mind. Also check out the company for an indication of its customer service. Get on the phone to the company and ask some questions."

Each host will guarantee a minimum percentage of time your site will be available, some will offer 99.9 percent. The difference may not sound that drastic but, for example, 98 per cent means that your web site will be inaccessible for 175 hours or eight days of the year. A 99.9 per cent guarantee means your site will only be down for a maximum of eight hours a year.

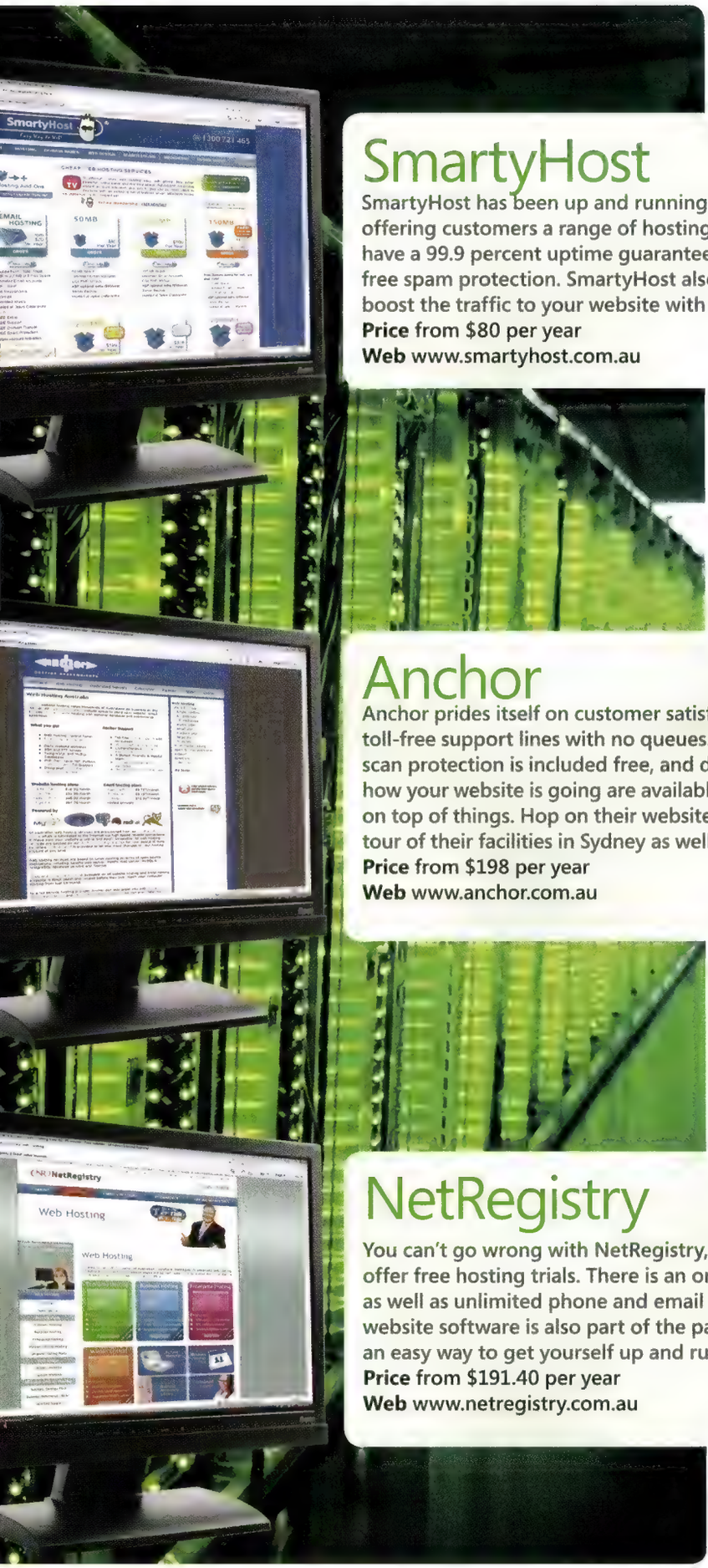
"Look for features such as a photo gallery and a blog tool," adds Hodson. "Large web hosts can also offer features like royalty-free stock photos for use on your site."

Photos will make your site more attractive but don't over indulge in large graphics and photos or users on slower connections will probably give up before the page loads.



HUMBLE SERVERS 1&1's Data Centre IV in Karlsruhe, Germany

1&1 DATEN TECHNIK MEHRT



SmartyHost

SmartyHost has been up and running since 1999, offering customers a range of hosting options. They have a 99.9 percent uptime guarantee, free setup, and free spam protection. SmartyHost also has options to boost the traffic to your website with Google search.
Price from $80 per year
Web www.smartyhost.com.au

Anchor

Anchor prides itself on customer satisfaction, offering toll-free support lines with no queues. E-mail and virus scan protection is included free, and daily statistics on how your website is going are available to help you stay on top of things. Hop on their website and get a virtual tour of their facilities in Sydney as well.
Price from $198 per year
Web www.anchor.com.au

NetRegistry

You can't go wrong with NetRegistry, especially as they offer free hosting trials. There is an online help centre as well as unlimited phone and email support. Instant website software is also part of the package, providing an easy way to get yourself up and running.
Price from $191.40 per year
Web www.netregistry.com.au

Five things to look out for

1 Uptime
Always check the amount of time your host guarantees your web site will be online for. Look for a 99.9 per cent service offer.

2 Customer service
Make sure your potential host offers good customer support hours. Try phoning to ask questions before you buy, if only to gauge how good its service really is.

3 Traffic allowance
Don't skimp on traffic allowance if you plan to attract people to your site. While a small business may not attract that much traffic, one article posted on digg.com could bring in unprecedented hits.

4 auDA
Check your host is a member of auDA, the organisation which regulates Australian domain registration. This will ensure good levels of service.

5 Room to grow
While your site may start off small, make sure your host allows you room to grow and upgrade if you need to.

MVP tip
Hosting

Craig Murphy
MVP, Connected Systems

Pick a hosting package that offers room to grow. It's easy to pick a package that offers you everything, but it's unlikely to be cheap. Start small with a basic package and gradually work up to the next one. There's nothing better than a personal recommendation – visit forums like www.webhostingtalk.com.au. Also check out websites that are using the hosts you are looking at giving your business to.

ON SALE NOW!

Make beautiful music...
Without a single instrument

Essential music-making tutorials, plus free CD every issue!

Digital video cameras Five great tools for making great home movies

01 Sony HDR-HC5

Price $1,999 **Web** www.sony.com.au

If you're after the latest technology, this camcorder records in glorious 1080i high definition. Your holiday video has never looked so good, and there are plenty of other features to distract you as well: it can take whopping 4-megapixel still photos while you're shooting.

The bottom line
Expensive, but picture quality is stunning and it's very easy to use, too.

★★★★★

02 JVC GR-D350

Price $599 ★★★★★

Despite its budget appearance, this camera offers remarkable picture quality and outstanding value for money.

03 JVC GZ-MG505

Price $1,999 ★★★★★

JVC's hard disk drive camcorder is the best of its kind. The 30GB internal drive will store over 20 hours of high quality digital video.

04 Canon MV920

Price $499 ★★★★

True widescreen recording and an impressive array of features for very little money.

05 Panasonic NV-GS300

Price $1,539 ★★★★

A fantastic value 3-CCD camcorder that offers professional-level video at a price even home users can afford.

Utilities The software your PC can't do without

01 WinRAR

Price Free **Web** www.rarlabs.com

The king of compression tools, WinRAR can compress and decompress pretty much any archived file you throw at it. If you've downloaded what appears to be a compressed file, chances are WinRAR will enable you to view its contents and extract what you need.

The bottom line
If you're sending or receiving big files regularly, this is an essential tool.

★★★★★

02 Acronis TrueImage 10

Price US$50 ★★★★★

For a total backup solution that includes Outlook contacts, diary and email folders, TrueImage is the only software you'll need.

03 FileZilla

Price Free ★★★★★

Windows Vista includes an Explorer-based File Transfer Protocol (FTP) application, but FileZilla is more verbose. And it's free.

04 Orb

Price Free ★★★★

Install this, leave your PC on, and you can access movies, music and photos wherever you are. You can also stream live TV.

05 IOLO Search And Recover 4

Price US$30 ★★★

Search and Recover 4 provides a three-step process to scan your laptop for deleted files and attempting recovery.

"My best buy" Recommended by John Markson

I bought Sony Vaio VGNFE45GW

I paid $2,299 **From** www.ht.com.au

This laptop is great for both work and play. The 15.4inch glossy widescreen display lets me work for long periods of time without straining my eyes too much. It also makes watching DVDs a lot more enjoyable. With Windows Vista Home Premium installed, it's easy to get the most out of your battery life. It's compact size means I can take it work everyday and not strain a muscle!

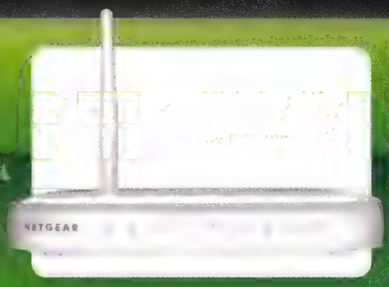
Tell us your best buy feedback@vistamag.com.au

Wireless routers Liberate your broadband connection

01 Netgear DG834Gv3 ADSL2+

Price $149 Web www.dsl-warehouse.com.au

Well designed and very reasonably priced, the white, sleek DG834G is now on its third revision and still remains top of the pile of 802.11g ADSL modem routers. It's wall-mountable or can be placed on a shelf. Like many of the other models featured here, the DG834G includes an integrated firewall so your PC is protected from various net nasties.



The bottom line
Simple, affordable and very easy to use and set up. It even looks quite pretty, too.
★★★★★

02 D-Link DIR-655 Xtreme N

Price $399 ★★★★★

The first Windows Vista certified router, this brand new pre-N unit has been passed with flying colours by the Microsoft labs.

03 Netcomm Super G Wireless Router

Price $169 ★★★★★

This router has prison-like security features including active firewall technology.

04 Linksys WRT54G

Price $159 ★★★★

Not the prettiest router in the world but it gets the job done for a good price. Simple to set up and use even for beginners.

05 Belkin N1 F5D8231

Price $220 ★★★★

A high price, but one worth paying if you're unfamiliar with wireless networking and want something future-proof.

Wireless VoIP phones Call for free

01 Philips VoIP 433 Duo

Price $138 Web www.philips.com.au

Connecting to both your normal phone line and your PC's USB port, this serves as both handsome wireless phone and extension of Windows Live Messenger. Call your contacts for free using Windows Live Messenger and then when your PC's turned off, the handsets will act as standard landline telephones.

The bottom line
Save money when your PC is on and use your normal phone line when it's off. Excellent.
★★★★★

02 Netcomm V20 DECT Kit

Price $49 ★★★★★

Capable of being your landline phone as well as VoIP phone, it features caller ID and an internal phone book.

03 VoSKY Call Center

Price $138 ★★★★★

Turns a wireless phone into VoIP or, if your Skype contacts are on quick dial, you can plug your standard phone into your PC.

04 Netgear SPH-101 Skype Phone

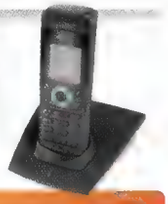
Price $499 ★★★★

The world's first Wi-Fi Skype handset, the Netgear enables free internet calls without the need for a PC to be on.

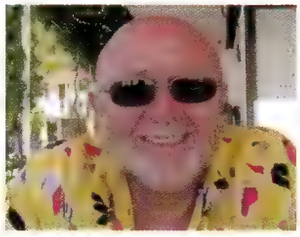
05 RTX DualPHONE 3088, Skype

Price $265 ★★★★

A true hybrid phone, this handset asks each time a number is dialled whether you'd like to use your home landline or Skype.



"My best buy" Recommended by John Watson

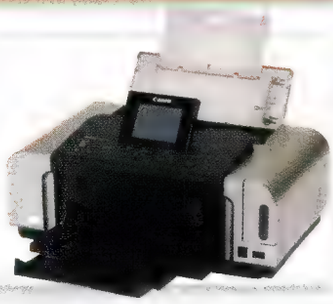


I bought Canon PIXMA iP6600d Photo Printer

I paid $318 From www.pc.net.au

I previously had a laser printer in my home office, which was perfect for work purposes. On holiday, though, I take a lot of family photos so wanted a printer that could handle office duties as well as print glossy photos – and this Canon really fits the bill. The price is very reasonable, and printed shots are good enough to hang on the wall.

Tell us your best buy feedback@vistamag.com.au

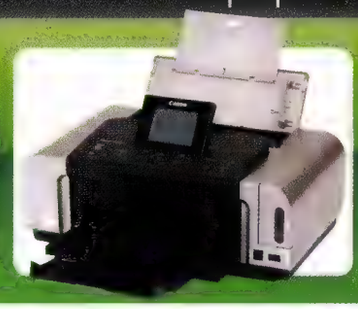


Printers Our favourite ways of getting it down on paper

01 Canon PIXMA iP6600d

Price $318 Web www.pc.net.au

With two paper trays and a huge screen, this is a superb all-round printer that's particularly suited to printing directly from a digital camera – just preview your snaps on the screen and send them straight to the page. Like many photo printers, though, it's far less impressive at printing text.



The bottom line
A great photo printer that makes it very easy to go straight from camera to print.
★★★★★

02 Samsung CLP-300

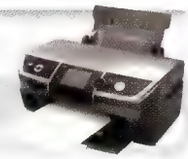
Price $499 ★★★★★

Gone are the days when a colour laser printer would cost you the earth. Australia's smallest colour laser printer is under $500. Small pop-in, pop-out toners make it easy to maintain.

03 Epson Stylus Photo R350

Price $225 ★★★★★

A basic photo printer that prints great photographic images for the price. Text printing isn't bad either, though it is slower than most dedicated text printers.



04 Canon PIXMA Mini 260

Price $175 ★★★★★

From subtle skin tones to vivid, high-contrast detail, the 260 delivers great results every time, and doesn't make you spend a fortune on ink and paper.

05 HP PhotoSmart 325

Price $99 ★★★★★

The 325's results are astounding, offering great colour and good sharpness. The HP is one of the few models on the market to offer the option of battery power, although the battery does cost extra.

Buying advice

James De Vile
Windows Vista Magazine

Thirsty work Ink is one of the most expensive consumables you'll need to purchase, so think about what suits your needs and budget when choosing a printer. There are three main types of home printer: single cartridge, individual ink and dye sublimation. The latter is common on small, 6x4-inch photo printers, and while the cartridges are cheap, they aren't designed for printing text. Single cartridge printers use one cartridge containing three colours; if one of the three runs out, you waste the other two. Individual ink uses separate cartridges for each colour, which is more expensive first time around, but in the long term they're cheaper to replace. They give the best colour, too.

"Individual ink cartridges are expensive at first, but work out cheaper in the long run"

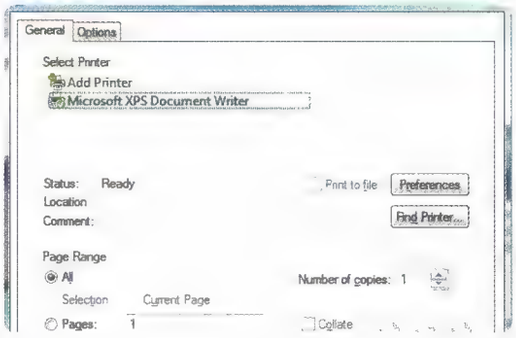
Email us: feedback@vistamag.com.au

Three things to look for...

1 Printing method You'll need to assess what you need a printer for. There's no point buying an individual ink printer for printing pages of text when a cheap black and white laser printer would do.

2 DPI The amount of dots per inch the printer can manage. The higher the number, the more detailed your image will be. For photos, around 9600 x 2400dpi is good.

3 Pages per minute If you print large documents, look at how many pages per minute the printer can produce. Laser printers are generally fastest, though on lower quality settings an inkjet printer can also keep an impressive pace.

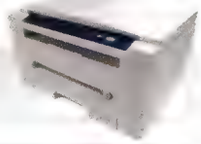


GO LOW If you drop the print quality settings, you can speed up the print rate if you're churning out a lot of text

06 Xerox WorkCentre 3119

Price $221 ★★★★

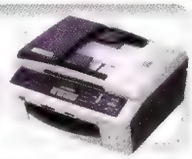
An above average 3-in-1 office scanner, printer and copier; this one's black and white only, but what it does it does very well.



07 Brother MFC-240C

Price $199 ★★★★

A six-in-one multi-function centre that packs a big punch. The built in memory card reader allows you to print photos without your PC.



08 HP Photosmart 375

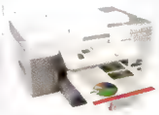
Price $399 ★★★

With a big screen and wireless printing support, this HP is a good choice if you want a feature-packed photo printer on a budget.

09 Lexmark X9350

Price $449 ★★★★

The X9350 is a great home office all-in-one, complete with Wi-Fi, Ethernet connection, fax capabilities and an LCD display.



10 Epson PictureMate 210

Price $249 ★★★

Photo printing becomes a breeze with this tiny photo printer. It includes a 2-inch LCD screen and can print a standard 6x4-inch photograph in less than a minute.

Best buys

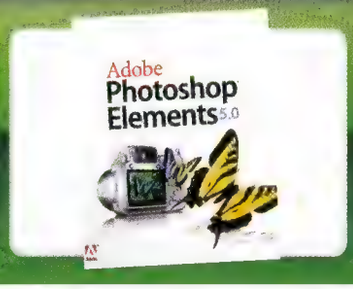
Shop with confidence: all the devices in our charts will give you the very best experience with your Windows Vista PC

Graphics software The best tools for digital creativity

01 Adobe Photoshop Elements 5

Price $157 **Web** www.buyquick.com.au

The little sister of Adobe's flagship Photoshop package, loved by creative types the world over. The Elements label means that it lacks the high-end features of the full version, but there's still room for some very powerful tools. It's perfect for touching up photos and creating graphics, and it's a very affordable price.



The bottom line
An affordable way to get started with the world's most popular graphics program.
★★★★★

02 Paint.NET

Price Free ★★★★★

Starting life as a uni design project mentored by Microsoft, Paint.NET is now the most powerful free image editing utility around.

03 Corel Paint Shop Pro Photo XI

Price $200 ★★★★

Now Windows Vista certified, this long-running image editor is packed with great ways to organise and edit your photographs.

04 IrfanView

Price Free ★★★★

Light on features, but that makes it easy to use. This free tool is perfect for quick, if basic, editing and resizing of images.

05 Ulead Photo Impact 12

Price $156 ★★★★

An excellent budget image-editing suite, with a wealth of tools per pound for managing, editing and sharing photos.

Gaming headphones Get into the game without making a row

01 Sennheiser RS110 Wireless

Price $150 **Web** www.mrgadget.com.au

Great for those scary video game moments that make you recoil from your monitor in fear – admit it, that does happen sometimes. Anyway, these spectacular-sounding wireless headphones ensure that when you do, your cans won't suddenly whip off your ears and fling back to your desk.

The bottom line
Excellent, detailed sound – and without wires to get in your way.
★★★★★

02 Sony MDRXD300

Price $149 ★★★★★

Including a movie/music switch, these headphones also offer dual headbands for hours of comfortable gaming.

03 Logitech Precision

Price $50 ★★★★

These budget cans feature a unique open air design, so your ears stay cool in even the most tense of virtual firefights.

04 Creative HN-700

Price $65 ★★★★

These headphones feature noise-cancelling, blocking the sounds of the real world in favour of their fantastic aural experience.

05 Plantronics .audio 350

Price $49 ★★★

A basic yet attractive-sounding gaming set, with pillow-soft ear cushions and a noise-cancelling microphone for in-game chat.

Laptops 10 ways to enjoy Windows Vista wherever you are

01 Hewlett Packard Pavilion dv9205tx

Price $3,999 **Web** www.hp.com.au

Big, bold and beautiful. There's nothing the dv9205tx can't do – aside from being carried easily. But with an Intel Core 2 Duo T7200, 2GB of memory and an Nvidia GeForce Go 7600, you'll want to be sitting down when you fire this laptop up.

The bottom line

An excellent all-round system that can handle almost everything you can throw at it.

★★★★★

02 Sony VGN-TX56GN/W

Price $2,999 ★★★★

Sony always produce great-looking laptops, and this is no exception. Sexy, slim and, like most ultraportables, a little light on performance. But it just looks so good.

03 Toshiba Portege R400

Price $3,750 ★★★★

Eventually you will want to switch this laptop on. But only after you have spent hours gawking at its sleek lines and marvelling at its total weight of 1.7kg.

04 Dell XPS M1210

Price $1,699 ★★★★

The XPS range represents the latest hardware technology in laptop form and this ultra-mobile notebook is remarkably powerful for something that weighs 2kg.

05 Fujitsu Lifebook P7230

Price $2,999 ★★★★

At 1.3kg it virtually floats, but its best not to test that theory. It's a great choice for those who have to work on the go. For those who say they work but actually play games, it won't really cope.

Buying advice

Jon Hicks
Windows Vista Magazine

Size matters The big factor when buying a notebook PC is deciding whether you want something easily transportable or something desk-based. If it's the latter, you can be led largely by the components: big, battery-guzzling extras like a top-end processor, graphics chip and screen will make for a much more enjoyable experience, and you don't have to worry about carrying around the resultant extra weight. If you want something for maximum portability, though, then smaller and simpler is better. Look for low weight, long battery life, and be prepared to sacrifice features like gaming-ready graphics cards and even, in the smallest models, a built-in DVD drive. You might not even get the Windows Aero interface.

Wherever possible: try before you buy. Things like the size and design of the keys and the type and position of the mouse touchpad or pointer can have a big influence on how well you get on with your notebook, and they aren't things that can be changed once you've bought it.

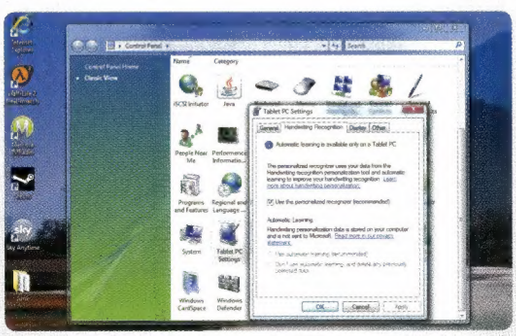
Email us: feedback@vistamag.com.au

Three things to look for...

1 Gaming graphics Many notebooks use integrated graphics chips; fine for most programs but terrible for gaming. Look for a proper graphics chip by NVIDIA or ATi and at least 128MB of discrete graphics memory.

2 Go Tablet If you're on your feet a lot or have trouble typing, get a Tablet PC. The screen can be folded flat and used like a clipboard, and Windows Vista's handwriting-recognition software can easily convert longhand.

3 Right hardware If you're after a home entertainment system, get the right hardware either built-in or as separate peripherals. Many notebooks come with Windows Vista Home Premium but few have the TV tuners, remote controls or the large hard drives to make best use of it.



SCRIBBLE SENSE Recognition software converts written text

06 Acer Aspire AS9425WSMi

Price $2,699 ★★★

A well priced desktop replacement that will get the job done with a lick of speed as well. Don't expect wonderous gaming performance from the Nvidia GeForce Go 7300 though.

07 Lenovo 3000 N100

Price $2,079 ★★★

Unlike the Toshiba, you won't be able to turn this laptop on fast enough. It's bland on the outside, but inside it gets interesting, with an Intel Core 2 Duo T5600 and a 120GB hard drive.

08 ASUS S6F Pink Limited Edition

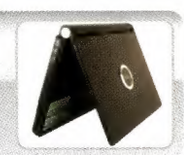
Price $3,299 ★★★

A great-looking shocking pink leather-bound PC with a reasonably high specification, but it costs the earth and you'll have to be very self-confident to be seen with it in public.

09 MSI MegaBook S262V

Price $1,899 ★★★

While there are no earth shattering specs under the bonnet of this wee laptop, there's certainly good value. Especially with the Intel Core 2 Duo T5500 powering it.



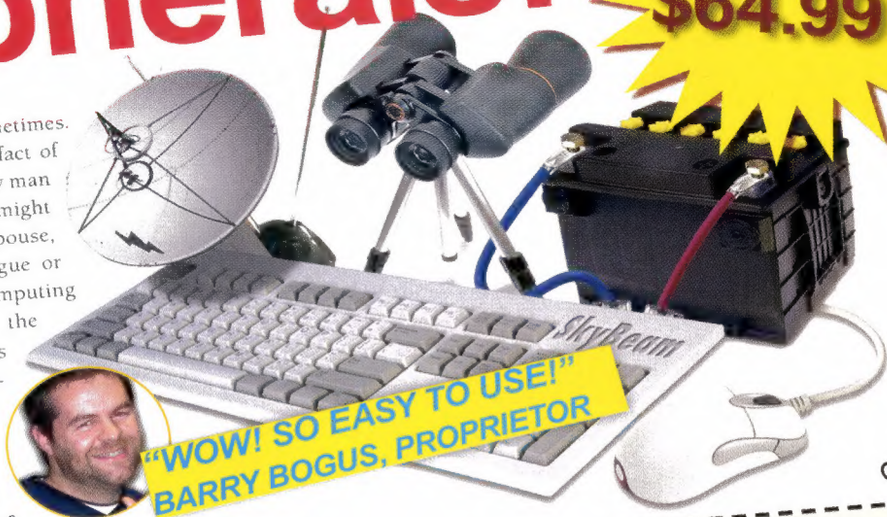
10 Acer Travelmate 4202AWLMI

Price $1,299 ★★★

Wallet in need of drastic weight reduction? Don't buy this machine. It's serious value for money, especially with Windows Vista Home Basic pre-installed and an Intel Core 2 Duo.

Set yourself free with SkyBeam Peripherals!

INTRODUCTORY PRICE OF $64.99!



"WOW! SO EASY TO USE!" BARRY BOGUS, PROPRIETOR

We all feel trapped sometimes. It is, as they say, a fact of life. The 21st century man or woman on the go might be able to avoid contending with a spouse, child, pet, disability, job, war, plague or elderly relative, but a personal computing system? There is no escaping the restriction of that side of our lives as we tear down the electric super-highway of the future at breakneck speed. Or at least, there never used to be...

Touch Button are proud to introduce their **new range of SkyBeam peripherals**, the world's first wireless mouse and keyboard with an epic seven-thousand-metre range*. Previous wireless peripherals might have shattered the shackles 'twixst man and desk and given you the freedom of a room, but we say, **"Why Stop There?"** With SkyBeam peripherals beneath your fingers you're in control of exactly where you work and where you play.

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** Under optimal conditions**.*

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Disclaimer: Touch Button is not responsible for damage to personal health incurred by the user while using SkyBeam hardware or while ascending to the required altitude requested by the SkyBeam Transmitter Unit. Similarly Touch Button bears no responsibility for noise pollution or other disturbances of the peace caused by the SkyBeam Transmitter Unit. The user purchases the unit with the knowledge the SkyBeam Transmitter Unit has been known to cause ill health and madness in birds caught in the signal.

❑ **YES, please rush me a SkyBeam Transmitter Unit so that I can change my life for the better! I enclose a banker's draft for over the required amount as I am so keen to guarantee my order!**

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Cut out this coupon, in... SKYBEAM PERIPHERA...

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That's all from us until issue four! It's on sale **Wednesday 23 May**

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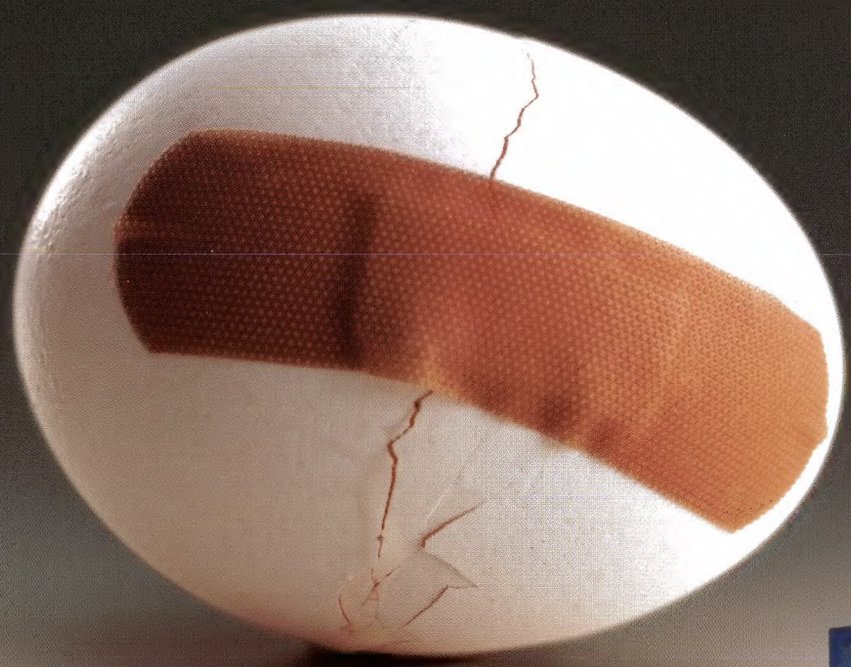
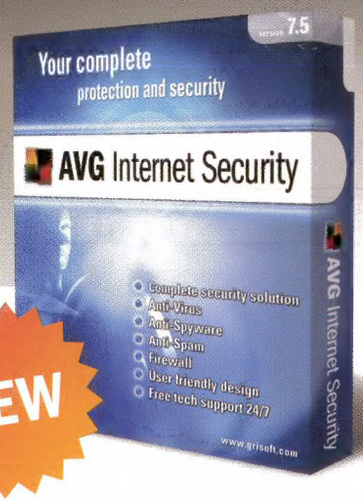
Having the latest version is always better than patching





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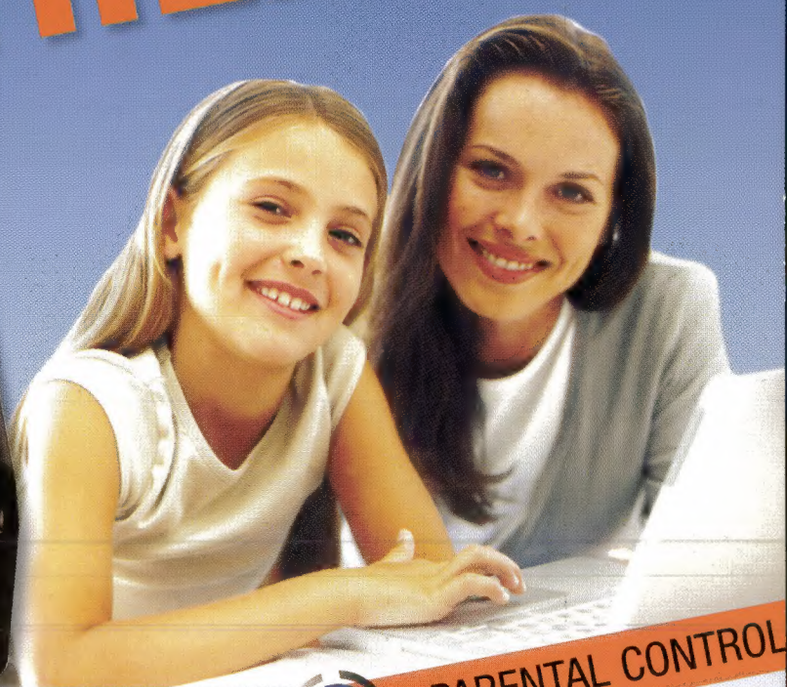
HOW TO CONTROL THE INTERNET AND PROTECT YOUR CHILDREN



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